

THE GOSPEL OF LAW
BY
S. J. STEWART

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Class. *BX9841* Copyright No.

Shelf. *S8*

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



THE GOSPEL OF LAW

A SERIES OF DISCOURSES

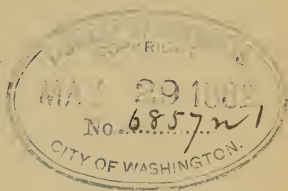
UPON

FUNDAMENTAL CHURCH DOCTRINES

checked BY

S. J. STEWART

"

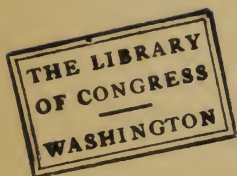


BOSTON

GEORGE H. ELLIS, 141 FRANKLIN STREET

1882

BX9841
.S8



COPYRIGHT,
1882,
By GEORGE H. ELLIS.

*TO my friends in the Independent Congregational Society of
Bangor, who have always encouraged me to an honest search
after truth, and then with such loyalty and appreciation have sup-
ported me in uttering my convictions, this volume is most affection-
ately dedicated.*

PREFACE.

THE principal reason for a preface to this volume is in order to show the causes of its publication. The introduction and the first discourses of the series in this book were delivered to the audience that I address regularly on Sunday, without any expectation that they would ever be published in a volume. Before the course was completed, however, a local demand came for their publication. Indeed, immediately after their delivery, three of the discourses — the two on “The Bible” and the one on “Morality” — were printed by others in a pamphlet form, and had a large local and provincial circulation. This volume is printed primarily, therefore, to satisfy a demand for this kind of thought in the city and State in which the discourses were originally given, and this will be the excuse for leaving them in the personal form in which they were delivered.

The principal motive in the book is to apply the facts of science to inherited doctrines, and then to give a positive basis of belief and conduct in consis-

tency with these facts, to interpret the results of the best authorities, and bring them into a practical form and conclusion. History and criticism and science cannot be created by a teacher of the people; but it is his province to use his reason in bringing their results and application. It would be only pedantic to refer in detail to authorities for the positions taken. Of course, no thoughtful man would dare to use as a basis for an argument anything but well-proved facts. There are differences of opinion even among scholars on many important questions, but no essential argument in this volume is based on anything that is not absolutely proved. Where there is any uncertainty, it is candidly stated. The book has been called by the name of the title-page, not only because the last discourse in the series properly bears that name, but because the attempt is made to test every subject positively by the scientific principle of universal law. Whatever gospel or "good news" there is grows out of natural law.

Three sermons originally in the series — those on "Conversion," "Faith," and "The Church" — have been omitted from this volume, in order to bring it into reasonable size; but no vital loss is thereby incurred.

It may seem to some that, even if true, some things

I have said had been better left unsaid. I cannot reply more appropriately than in the words of Emerson: "Nor do I fear scepticism for any good soul. . . . I dip my pen in the blackest ink, because I am not afraid of falling into my ink-pot. . . . I see not why we should give ourselves such sanctified airs. If the Divine Providence has hid from men neither disease nor deformity, nor corrupt society, . . . let us not be so nice that we cannot write down these facts coarsely as they stand, or doubt but there is a counter-statement as ponderous, which we can arrive at, and which, being put, will make all square."

BANGOR, ME., March 1, 1882.

By accumulated experiences, the man of science acquires a thorough belief in the unchanging relations of phenomena, in the invariable connection of cause and consequence, in the necessity of good or evil results. Instead of the rewards and punishments of traditional belief, which men vaguely hope they may gain, or escape, spite of their disobedience, he finds that there are rewards and punishments in the ordained constitution of things, and that the evil results of disobedience are inevitable. He sees that the laws to which we must submit are not only inexorable, but beneficent. . . . Hence, he is led constantly to insist on these laws, and is indignant when men disregard them. And thus does he, by asserting the eternal principles of things and the necessity of conforming to them, prove himself intrinsically religious.—*Herbert Spencer.*

For it lies in the nature of progress that the heresy or new knowledge of yesterday is the orthodoxy or old knowledge of to-day; and that, to those who have learned to associate their aspirations with the old knowledge, it may well seem impossible that like aspirations should be associated with the new. But the experience of many ages of speculative revolution has shown that, while Knowledge grows and old beliefs fall away and creed succeeds to creed, nevertheless that Faith which makes the innermost essence of religion is indestructible.—*John Fiske.*

Out from the heart of nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old:
The litanies of nations came,
Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
Up from the burning core below,—
The canticles of love and woe.

Emerson.

O gods dethroned and deceased, cast forth, wiped out in a day!
From your wrath is the world released, redeemed from your
chains, men say.

New gods are crowned in the city, their flowers have broken your
rods:

They are merciful, clothed with pity, the young compassionate
gods. *Swinburne.*

AND, for success, I ask no more than this,—
To bear unflinching witness to the truth.
All true, whole men succeed; for what is worth
Success's name, unless it be the thought,
The inward surety, to have carried out
A noble purpose to a noble end,
Although it be the gallows or the block? . . .
Get but the truth once uttered, and 'tis like
A star new-born, that drops into its place,
And which, once circling in its placid round,
Not all the tumult of the earth can shake.

Lowell.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION,	11
II. THE BIBLE : THE OLD TESTAMENT,	17
III. THE BIBLE: THE NEW TESTAMENT,	45
IV. MIRACLES,	74
V. GOD,	98
VI. SATAN OR THE DEVIL,	121
VII. SIN AND THE ATONEMENT,	142
VIII. HELL AND SALVATION,	160
IX. PRAYER,	180
X. MORALITY,	200
XI. JESUS,	229
XII. PREDESTINATION AND SCIENTIFIC NECESSITY,	253
XIII. IMMORTALITY,	276
XIV. THE GOSPEL OF LAW,	298

INTRODUCTION.

TO-DAY, I begin a series of discourses upon the theological doctrines generally accepted by the Church, using, as far as possible, the method of modern science and the facts furnished by the best scholarship.

The necessity for such a course has been laid upon me in such a manner, and to such a degree, that I am compelled to obey. It must be evident to every thoughtful man that society is in a transition state in regard to religious beliefs. If there are some questions, however, which are not yet settled, there must be a possibility of finding out what is the nearest truth. It is our duty to ascertain everything possible, even if we cannot discover absolute truth. It is often assumed by certain moralists that the best method is no method, and that public teachers should simply try to inspire men to a virtuous life, without any regard to theories or doctrines. Such a course, however, is impossible, because no man can talk about morality or religion unless he has some theory in regard to them. Some kind of a doctrine must always be presupposed in every moral exhortation. It is useless to tell men to be moral, unless we can tell them what we mean by morality. It is useless to urge them to a religious life, unless we have some theory about religion.

Every public teacher to-day, who is sincere, must feel bound to examine for himself the fundamental questions of right and wrong, of morality and religion. No matter how anxious he may be to persuade men to lead a deep, pure life, he will feel the necessity of settling some abstract questions, in order to find a working basis. In the very beginning, however, he will find that there is generally accepted in the Church a certain

theological system. It will not be possible for him to ignore that system. He must either accept it or reject it, and he must have reasons for his action in either case. It is my desire to bring truth to those who listen to me, in order to aid them in their daily life. But I discover that when I attempt to discuss any question of practical importance, I at once meet an inherited theology which I am compelled to notice. The traditional theology is primarily founded upon revelation and authority. If its assumptions are correct, we have no logical right to use the human reason. Nothing is more inconsistent than for men to assume they have given up old theologies, and then use the language of those theologies, and practically assume them to be true. Men, for instance, assume that they have given up a belief in an infallible Bible, and salvation through a crucified Redeemer, and will still appeal to the book, as if it were after all infallible, and talk of a salvation which grew out of a traditional scheme of redemption.

The necessity for a new consideration of doctrines is because we have new knowledge and a new method. Modern scholarship and science have affected every one of these doctrines. They are all linked together, they all grew out of the same false conception of the government of the universe. Although some of them have an eternal principle beneath their imperfect form, many of them are false; and all of them need readjustment, in order to be consistent with the best Biblical criticism and the proved facts of science. Not even a liberal church can be satisfied with the ideas of the progressive men of fifty years ago. In every place but in the Church, it is recognized that the whole theory of the universe has been changed since 1859. New theories about the origin of man and of species, the growth of religion and the Bible, the literature of other religions, compel a reconstruction of our whole system of theology.

If I am to be an intelligent man, I must become familiar with the essential discoveries and theories of our age. The only question, then, is whether or not we shall consider this matter together? There is a theory that, while public teachers

should make themselves familiar with the latest discovered facts, when they speak to their people it should only be on practical or sentimental questions. But I have no sympathy with any such theory. If it is safe for one man to know the facts of science and scholarship, it is safe for him to give these facts to others to the best of his ability. Mr. Greg very justly criticises the attempt to make a "distinction between *esoteric* and *exoteric* views and knowledge," and the theory "that truth is the privilege of the few, and edification the only claim and right of the many,—that, in a word, sound doctrine is only for the clergy and safe doctrine for the laity." Or, as Mr. Spencer says: "Let those who can believe that there is eternal war set between our intellectual faculties and our moral obligations. I, for one, admit no such radical vice in the constitution of things." Moreover, one of the greatest aids to virtue is vigorous thought and intelligence. It has been suggested to me, therefore, in my studies that I ought, as far as possible, to give you the best results of modern investigation. Admitting that there was much truth in the writings of men of the past, the investigators of our age have thrown a new flood of light upon all the problems of life. It is surely not right that I should bring to you teachings built upon half-outgrown or exploded theories, when the scholarship of our age is in a different direction. It is not necessary for me to give you a catalogue of the names of the best modern scientists and Biblical critics and authorities on the growth of religious beliefs and customs; but no problem is settled to-day where the results of these in their several departments are ignored. It would be inappropriate for me to preach science to you or give you the technical processes of modern scholarship, even if I had the peculiar training; but it is my duty to take the results of scholarship and apply them to theology. All theology is built upon some kind of scholarship and science: the only question is whether it shall be the latest and best or that which is rejected in every other department of thought. To attempt to discuss moral problems to-day without recognizing the science and philosophy of to-day

would be like an attempt to play Hamlet with Hamlet left out.

There is one principle which is practically accepted among all intelligent men, outside of theological circles, and that is that this is a universe of natural law. But, if that is a principle, it must be applied to theology. While negatively, therefore, we may be compelled to reject some old doctrines, we shall find, I hope, positively a religion and morality founded on this principle.

Let me say here that I enter upon this study with a spirit of sympathy for those who may accept old doctrines. Our love for truth makes it necessary that we should show, perhaps, the falseness of some of these doctrines; but we may still have sympathy with the faith and hope and sense of mystery that created them. In fact, the most advanced critics are the most sympathetic students of the growth of dogmas and beliefs.

In our investigations, we must measure everything by the use of reason in the light of well-proved facts. There is positively no use in mentioning any subject, if one fact must be kept back through some motive of policy or expediency. The scientific method is the only one that is of any value. It will be of no use in this age to try to prove anything by isolated texts of Scripture. Even if all the texts of Scripture were found to support a certain theory, it would not prove anything; for a part of our investigation must include the question of the infallibility of the Scriptures. Of course, in our study, Scriptural writings, like all others, are valuable as illustrations, and must be recognized; yet, without anticipating anything here in regard to their infallibility, we must take in other proof. Even if true, the Bible is only one expression of truth. Sects quote text against text with equal facility; and we must therefore, as far as possible, take into consideration everything that is proved.

I cannot, of course, take up every doctrine that might be considered fundamental by every believer, as there must be a limit somewhere, but I shall try to examine the most essen-

tial. There is compensation, however, in our method of treatment. Every time we consider one doctrine carefully, we incidentally receive light upon every other. For instance, in considering the questions of God and Jesus, we incidentally find the truth in regard to the Trinity: in finding out the true meaning of sin and salvation, we indirectly find the meaning of a true conversion. Every discourse, therefore, becomes a commentary upon every other. These doctrines are all logically connected, had the same origin, and stand or fall together. Hoping that, when we have considered this system together, we can go forward without continual explanation in upholding a natural religion and morality, we can now enter upon the different subjects in this series of discourses.

THE BIBLE: THE OLD TESTAMENT.

WE are compelled to begin this series of discourses with a consideration of the Bible, because, on every other subject, we would be forced to make continual explanations, unless the value of the authority of that book is distinctly settled and understood. To avoid repetition, we must therefore begin with an understanding in regard to a book which is quoted as infallible by many people. Many of our best thinkers have treated the Bible in the most critical and scholarly manner, but they have devoted several lectures to that purpose. It seems almost impossible for me to do any full justice to the modern rational view of the Bible, in so brief a time. The difficulty will be not to find something to say, but rather to judge what it will be possible to omit, without doing injustice to the subject. It would be much easier to ignore the whole subject of Scriptural infallibility; but that we have no moral right so to do, in the present state of opinion, is most manifest.

There lies on this desk a book, which a large portion of the world calls the Word of God. On this book masses of men build all their hopes of joy here and of salvation hereafter; by-it, they test every question of science and art, and morals and happiness; it is to them the one only true and divine revelation; it has been made sacred to them, too, by the most hallowed associations and tenderest memories; because of a belief in its holiness, it has seemed as valuable to some men as life;

for it, martyrs' blood has been shed, and, clasping it to the heart, strong men and loving women have gone with faith into the cold waters of death. It would be most superficial therefore to pass by a book, so sacred to many men and women, with a smile or a sneer of indifference. But, on the other hand, the fact that it is considered sacred by many people is no proof that their theory concerning it is correct. Other peoples have believed just as devoutly in other books, and martyrdom only proves that men are zealous in their beliefs, but in no sense proves that their beliefs are true. Men have died just as heroically under the wheel of a Juggernaut as in behalf of a Bible or a Jesus; and women, in an hour of death, have clasped a wooden crucifix with as much devout faith as any Bible lover ever possessed for her precious volume.

As lovers of truth, we must know the facts on this question. If this is the Word of God, with such magic power, we want to know it, too. But, on the other hand, there is something more important than reverence for a book, and that is reverence for *truth*. If the book *is* the truth, and the only truth, then we are bound to accept it as infallible; but if it is not the truth, if, on the other hand, it stands in the way of truth, as a continual obstacle in the path of all investigation, then our reverence for truth makes it a duty to reject it. As honest men, therefore, we are bound to weigh the assumptions that are made for it, and to discover the exact facts as near as they can be discovered.

There is no way to form a correct opinion of this book, handed down from the past, except to find out how it grew. The method sometimes adopted by men

in their treatment of the Bible is illogical and inconsistent. Now, it is either the Word of God or it is not: it is either to be accepted as infallible, or else it is to be judged like other books. If a man begins to throw out certain parts of it, he cannot in consistency retain others as an infallible revelation. Some of it may be true most certainly, but so are portions of other books true. *Is a thing true merely because it is in this book?* is the crucial question. If not, why should men, who reject certain parts, still quote it on all occasions as the Word of God, pre-eminently? No man has any authority for denying the positions of the literal dogmatists, and then coming with his fanciful interpretations. How does he know it has a hidden meaning? How much of it is allegorical? When he assumes that it is the Word of God, to be interpreted in a fanciful manner, may he not be overlooking all the facts in regard to its growth?

The time has come when the people should know the substance of modern scholarship in regard to the Bible. It is true, moral parts of the Bible may be of use to men in their devotions and for instruction, even if they have mistaken ideas in regard to it; but it will be of much more use when the people know the real truth. When we read the Scriptures in public with the feeling that the people know what we mean by it, and that we only read them as the opinions of men of the past, and not as infallible truth, they will seem much more interesting.

Now, then, to this book that lies before us. In order to be as brief as possible, let us quote from the statement of the Evangelical Alliance, which embraces all the churches of Christendom, except the Universalist and

Unitarian. That statement expresses a belief in "the divine inspiration, authority, and sufficiency of the Holy Scripture." This is the broadest, fairest expression of evangelical scholars on this subject. We know, of course, that the average belief is stronger than this expression. We can hear men say that every word of the Bible is true, and every punctuation point, from lid to lid, has a meaning. There are men who in battle carry a Bible over their heart, to keep off the enemy's bullets; who would think their home deserted of God, without this bound volume; who would think that to burn a copy of the Scriptures would likely bring them a direct curse from Heaven; who would open the book at hazard, and consider the first verse that came to view a direct commandment from God; and who, in the most conscientious manner, would declare that a man, who did not believe in the Bible, was not only a sceptic, but was also likely immoral, and without any hope of salvation. There are men who are not conspicuous for either intelligence or honesty or fairness, or sweetness of disposition, who think that their worship of, and belief in, this book is religion enough in itself, and who test every question of geology and astronomy and natural law and character by its teachings. Let us examine, then, the authority for this belief.

If we ask the average believer in the Bible infallibility how he comes to accept it as he does, we will likely find that it is simply because he has been so taught. In his infancy, a Bible was placed in his hands as the Word of God, which he was never to doubt. Men might use their reason in explaining the Bible, but must not go behind it to show how it grew or to compare it with

truth. But this is surely not much evidence on the question. No police court would convict a man of petty larceny on such evidence, much less condemn him to imprisonment for life. Yet the Bible believers condemn to eternal infamy disbelievers in a book, of whose ultimate authority they know nothing.

Now, everything we need to consider on this subject can be placed under two propositions, both of which must be proved in order that the Bible may be shown to be infallible. First, it must be proved that even if the men of the past, who are called saints, and whose names are attached now to the writings in the Bible, ever wrote the different portions of it, that they are therefore necessarily true, and the Word of God. Or, to put it in another form, even if Moses and Ezra and Daniel, and John and Matthew and Paul, and other Bible characters, wrote the parts or spoke the words attributed to them, it would still have to be proved that what they said was true, and the revelation of God, on all questions. Secondly, in order to prove that the Bible is the infallible Word of God, it must be proved, at least, that it was written by certain responsible men. In other words, if we cannot discover who wrote portions of the Bible, if they came into existence through some contrivance of men, if they were not written by the men whose names are attached to them, it destroys their value as an authoritative revelation. You will readily see the force of this proposition. A true utterance is true, whether found in a Bible or in a poem. But the claim for the teachings of the Bible is that they are infallible, because they were revealed through certain holy men. It will be necessary to show, therefore,

that certain responsible men did so write them, under such a divine influence as to keep them from any mistake. There can be but one alternative from this second proposition; and that is to prove that the Bible came from God in some mysterious manner, and is therefore the Word of God.

It seems best to consider the second proposition first. Let us enter into an historical investigation together, and let us know distinctly what we are doing. We are to examine whether we have utterances of certain men, who were once supposed to be under the inspiration of God, in such a form as to prove that Word infallible. If we find that we have not, and also find that the Bible has assumed its present form by natural methods, and even by some contrivance of men, then we will see the falseness of the alternative idea that it is the Word of God because it came in some mysterious manner. Let us begin with what we have, and trace this book backwards to its source. Here is a book printed in English, which many men call the Word of God. This book we find was made in 1611 A.D. by fifty-four learned men under James I. of England. It was made by a revision of previous English versions, which had themselves been translated from Hebrew and Greek. This book, therefore, which lies before us, cannot be the infallible Word of God, unless King James and the Englishmen under him were under the direct inspiration of the Deity. This book was but a revision of certain English translations which had gone before. But, to go back still further, there was no complete English Bible printed till 1535 A.D., and the first results of the printing-press, so far as the English Bible is concerned, were the trans-

lation of Tyndale, which is the true original of all English versions. There were also the translations of Coverdale, "Matthew's Bible," the "Great Bible," the "Genevan Bible" in 1560 A.D., with Calvinistic notes, and many others. Then, in 1568 A.D. was printed the "Bishop's Bible," which was the basis upon which our present Bible was made and revised. In 1582 A.D. at Rheims, the Catholics published the New Testament, and in 1610 A.D. they produced a version of the Old Testament at Douay. All this is uninteresting enough; but the point of significance is that our English Bible, in any form, is only about five hundred years old, counting even from the days of Wycliffe. It is of course known that Wycliffe translated the Scriptures into English first, and this was in 1384 A.D. But this was not a printed English Bible, as it was before the age of the printing-press. Here, we must confine ourselves to the one distinct channel of our present version. It is common with many persons to attach much importance to the titles and subscriptions of books and chapters in the Bible. But our present system of chapters was invented by Cardinal Hugo in the thirteenth century, and was first used in the Latin Bible. The first division into verses was made by Robert Stephens, a printer, in 1551 A.D. The titles, too, and nearly all the subscriptions are utterly worthless, and are the devices of men in comparatively modern times. And yet these titles, of no authority, have furnished the foundation of much of our superstitious theology.

But here we discover that our river has two great tributaries, with an essentially different source. Up to the time of the invention of printing there was no such

thing as a rounded, complete book called the Bible. There were two collections of writings called the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Scriptures. In the original, too, the word Bible does not mean the singular "book," but is a plural, meaning "books." Instead of an infallible book, therefore, we soon get back to a time when there were only "books" or writings or manuscripts. We find then at this point that we have bound together certain writings, translated from certain Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, which we call the Old and New Testaments, respectively. Just here let us stop long enough to see how much of the infallibility remains for our English book, which men kiss in law courts, and to which they cling when they come to die. The punctuation, paper, divisions into chapters and verses, and titles at the head of chapters and books, are all the creation of printers, and other men, who have lived within five hundred years.

Leaving our single channel now and following up the tributary called the Old Testament, we find that the oldest Hebrew manuscript is not of an earlier date than 1106 A.D. That is to say, the oldest written Old Testament we have concerning events which transpired from eighteen hundred to six thousand years ago is not eight hundred years old. Of course, this manuscript may have been, and perhaps was, translated from others with the most scrupulous care. But it is valuable to call attention to one fact which will be as important in examining the New Testament as the Old. Admitting that there was once a manuscript which contained the infallible Word of God, what assurance have we that we possess it? It is asserted that there have been as many as thirty

thousand "various readings" of the old manuscripts.* That is to say, in interpreting or copying certain ancient manuscripts, there have been thousands of copies differing to a greater or less degree. Moreover there have been "glosses" which might change the meaning. Copyists in copying a manuscript, sometimes for a good and sometimes for an evil purpose, would occasionally insert in the margin certain explanations; another copyist sometimes would insert this explanation in the reading; a mistake in a word would be copied by the next transcriber. Unless, then, every one of the thousands of copyists was infallibly inspired not to make any mistakes in penmanship, we are never sure we have the exact original. In the early days of printing, too, many errors would creep in. An edition of 1631 was called the "wicked Bible," because the "not" was left out of the Seventh Commandment; and another almost as wicked a Bible was published soon after, in which Paul was made to say that "the unrighteous shall inherit the kingdom of God." If that could happen in comparatively critical times, how much more might mistakes arise farther back in history! One other point here is of consequence. Originally, the Hebrew manuscripts were written without any vowels whatever; and yet everything depended on what vowel was understood.† A Hebrew vowel is a mere speck, of importance according to its location in the word. It was not till the Massorets — between 600 A.D. and 1100 A.D.—marked the vowels

* The various readings of the New Testament have been placed as high as one hundred and fifty thousand.

† A word in Genesis xlvii., 31, might mean either "bed" or "staff," according to the vowels used; and in fact our English Old Testament calls it one, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews the other.

in the text, that there was anything like a correct use of vowels in the Hebrew Scriptures. So, according to the believers in infallibility, our morals and our salvation for all eternity may depend upon whether or not a copyist has happened to splatter his ink and make unintentional Hebrew vowels, or upon whether even a fly has chanced to dip his foot in the fresh fluid and to punctuate some consonant; and our only hope is that both copyist and fly were infallibly inspired.

But, in tracing this tributary to its source, we must go back still further. We have assumed thus far that there might be a distinct, original Word of God somewhere, even if we have no infallible translation. We must therefore look and see if we can find any compact, distinct Old Testament, supernaturally revealed. We will take one long step backward, to the days of Ezra. The first attempt to compile into a canon the Hebrew writings was made by Ezra. Now, the Hebrew Scriptures, as we possess them, were divided into three parts: (1) the Law, or the first five books; (2) the Prophets, including Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, with Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets; (3) the "Writings," including the Psalms, and all the other books in our Old Testament. Originally, the Law included Joshua, the Prophets, and the Psalms. And here, let me say, I cannot go into all the details, as there is a great difference among scholars on many minor questions in regard to the divisions.

(I.) The first canon, we may say broadly, was made by Ezra after his return from the captivity, about 458 B.C. It merely included the first five books called The Law. The significance of the fact is that the first

known collection of writings considered sacred was made more than one thousand years after the supposed age of Moses.

(II.) The second canon was likely made under Nehemiah, soon after, as it is said in II. Maccabees that, when founding a library, "he gathered together the acts of the kings and the prophets, and the (Psalms) of David, and the epistles of the kings concerning the holy gifts." That is to say, Nehemiah, or men under him, added to the canon the historical books and some of the prophets; not all of the prophets, however, as Jonah and Daniel, and perhaps Malachi, had not yet been written. Even this canon was not likely completed till the close of the fourth century B.C. Let us stop long enough to see where we are in this study thus far. As late as 400 B.C., a large portion of what we call the Word of God, supposed to contain an infallible revelation, was not yet edited, and some of it not yet even in existence.

(III.) It is almost impossible to tell anything positively about the third canon, or the addition of the other "writings," besides those just mentioned, like the Psalms and Proverbs. These writings were collected, and even written, through a process of years. I have been compelled from lack of time to omit many interesting points; but I call your attention to this essential fact, that not even at the birth of Jesus was there a complete canon of the Hebrew Bible. The Book of Ezekiel, for instance, was not admitted at the first, because it seemed to contradict the Law. The Book of Ecclesiastes was kept out for a time, because of its sceptical and contradictory teaching; Canticles, because it was considered by many to be too sensual to be read; Esther,

because there is no word about God in it; and Proverbs, because of its lack of any consistent teaching. There was continual controversy, even in the first century after Jesus, among the Jews, as to what should be considered the sacred canon. It was not till the Synod of Jamnia, 90 A.D., that the canon was virtually settled; and even then it was not absolutely defined, because Sirach was added to it as late as the fourth century A.D., and Baruch was read on the day of atonement in the third century. The Samaritans never accepted anything but the first five books of the Bible, because they thought no other books were invested with sufficient authority.

Besides the Hebrew or Palestinian version of the Hebrew writings at that time, there soon arose a version called the Septuagint. This was made necessary by the fact that many of the Jews in Egypt, and elsewhere, were compelled to use the Greek language, and the Scriptures were therefore translated into Greek. It is called the Septuagint because of a fable that seventy-two scholars were locked up separately, and all made exactly the same translation. The fact is that Ptolemy Philadelphus, in behalf of literature, employed learned men, to get as correct a translation as possible of these old writings. But this version became the popular one of early Christianity,—although the Latin Vulgate had at last a great influence,—and had in it, besides our Hebrew Scriptures, several other books which are now called the Apocrypha. Many of the books you will find in any large family Bible. Now you know that, although they may be so found there, they are not considered the Word of God by Protestants. The Catholic Council of Trent declared these to be canonical, with the exception

of I. and II. Esdras and the Prayer of Manasses,* although the Catholic Bible does not contain all the Apocryphal books that were received by the early Church with the same sacredness as other Scriptures. These books were not only included in the canon, but were mixed in with the other books in such a way as to show that they were then considered of equal authority. Esdras follows Chronicles; Tobit and Judith are between Nehemiah and Esther; the Wisdom of Solomon, and Sirach follow Canticles; Baruch follows Jeremiah; Susannah, Daniel, and the three Books of Maccabees form the conclusion. The Ethiopian version, too, contains other books, not even enumerated here, and gives the same authority to the Book of Adam as to the Book of Genesis. Even the Book of Enoch is quoted in the New Testament with as much authority as the Pentateuch. The Council of Carthage, 397 A.D., accepted a list of books to be used, which had been made by the Council of Hippo (393), and is considered the first council which definitely decided on the canon of our New Testament; but this same council also accepted the Apocrypha. So, if we go back to the past for some decision as to the Word of God, we are forced to receive this Apocrypha; and the Protestant Church to-day practically rejects a portion of what has the same authority as its authorized Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament. If it is truth men want, too, instead of a blind, ignorant worship of a book, a great wrong is done by rejecting the Apocrypha. The Apocryphal books

*This, according to several authorities; but, according to S. Davidson, the original exceptions were III. and IV. Esdras, III. Maccabees, and the Prayer of Manasses.

are many of them far superior to the other books of the Bible. The Maccabees contain one of the most interesting and reliable histories of an important period in Jewish history. We find in the Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiasticus intimations of a belief in immortality, which cannot be found in the Old Testament. We find here the natural growth of many ideas which many suppose to have been revealed full-fledged by Christianity. But to sum up this point: when we try to find an original canon for our present Scriptures, we find that the canon was formed gradually, and by the most arbitrary methods. There is no consistent reason for our present canon. The question as to what is to be considered the Word of God was settled in an uncritical age, in quarrelsome councils, which were manipulated with as much craft and governed by as selfish motives as a modern religious council or a political convention.

But we must go back one step further still. It may be said that, even if the canon were formed arbitrarily, yet the different books preserved are so reliable in themselves as to make up for us an infallible Word of God. We must, then, take as careful a look as time will permit at these books themselves. Now let us know distinctly what we are to examine here. We are to consider whether enough is known about the authorship of these books and whether they were written at such a time as to prove them absolutely reliable records. Up to this point, I have not made one historical statement that is not acknowledged in substance by every man with any claims to Biblical scholarship. Here, we approach a point where there may be some difference of opinion. I shall, however, be careful to confine myself

to essential facts acknowledged by scholars. Men, for instance, differ as to the time or authorship of certain books; but there are essential facts accepted by all who are authority on the subject.

First, then, Moses never wrote the first five books called by his name; and nobody knows, or has known for at least two thousand years, who did write them. There are historical and geographical references that show they were written near the close of the kingly period. I can only illustrate this point, but, if there were time, could easily give proof. For instance, when it is said in Genesis that something happened "before there reigned a king of the children of Israel," it shows that it was written by some one who knew something about the kings of Israel. Moses, who lived hundreds of years before there was a king, would not speak of a time before there was one. Only seven centuries B.C., we are told that Josiah was very much surprised when a copy of the Law was discovered in the temple, as repairs were being made. But it seems very strange that he should have been surprised, if there were already five books of Moses in existence. Stranger, too, that a king, hundreds of years after David, should have been surprised to hear that Jahveh was the only true God, if the Pentateuch were already formed. The fact is that the Pentateuch is a collection of different laws and traditions and writings gathered up gradually, and compiled even after Josiah. In Numbers, it is said that "the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." But, if Moses was very meek, he surely never wrote that about himself. There are many passages that show that the writer of the Pentateuch lived

in Palestine; but, according to the record itself, Moses never was in Palestine. In Exodus, God is represented as saying that he "appeared unto Abraham and Isaac and Jacob by the name of God Almighty; but by my name Jahveh was I not known unto them." And yet one of the writers in Genesis does call God by the name Jahveh, showing that it was a writer who lived under a later development of the God idea. There is no important difference between the language employed in the Pentateuch and that of books written about the time of the captivity. Even the literalist will hardly claim that Moses wrote the record concerning his own death, which is found in the Pentateuch. The ancient Jews, and even Philo, never thought of referring to Moses as an historian, but only as a law-giver. Now, if you ask me who wrote these books, I must reply that I cannot answer, nor can any one else. They were probably compiled by some one in the days of Josiah, or perhaps Manasseh, although scholars differ. The best scholars agree on this point, however, that there were two original documents, and perhaps more, from which a compilation was made. One old writer, called the Jehovist, used the name Jahveh, and at least one other writer, called the Elohist, used the name Elohim, for God. There are two distinct histories of the creation and of the flood and of the way Saul became king. Deuteronomy was perhaps written by a different person from the rest. We cannot make a complete critical survey, but in general it may be said that there were likely many old writings and traditions. Reference is even made in the Pentateuch to the Book of the Wars of Jahveh and the Book of Jashar. The Pentateuch was likely called the Law after Moses, be-

cause it contains laws; and Moses possibly gave the substance of the Ten Commandments. But some of the documents out of which the whole Pentateuch was formed did not exist until several hundred years after his death. The Pentateuch was therefore formed by some unknown compiler out of a variety of materials, not far from the time of the captivity. This will account for the various contradictions and repetitions, as the compiler did not attempt always to reconcile the different portions.

The Book of Joshua, which comes next, was a part of the Pentateuch in the Jewish canon, and was not written by Joshua, unless he too could write up the account of his own death, but was also compiled near the time of the captivity, and was essentially formed from two distinct fragments. Judges, which assumes to be a record of the life of the Hebrews in Canaan before there was a king, and contradicts the Book of Joshua by showing that there was not unity when the tribes first entered the land, but that they were motley tribes, defending themselves as best they could, under strong leaders, was probably compiled about 700 B.C., by an unknown hand. The Book of Ruth is one of the most beautiful stories in the Old Testament, and is a sweet poem, full of the most charitable spirit. As to the time when it was written, scholars differ so much that we cannot be dogmatic. Davidson points to the time of King Hezekiah as the time when the writer lived; but Oort and Kuenen think it was written during or after the days of Ezra, and written for a purpose. That purpose was to break down the narrow spirit of Ezra and Nehemiah. These men had forbidden marriage with foreigners, and tried to

make the Jews as exclusive as possible. But this writer of Ruth shows that even David, their ideal king, was born of a Moabitess. The Books of Samuel were not written by Samuel, unless he too could write of his own death. They are full of contradictions, and the text has been very corrupt; and they were likely written by some one, long after the events recorded, who wished to glorify Samuel and David over Saul. It is probable the books assumed their present form about the time of the captivity.

The Books of Kings were written at different times, but were compiled by some one with more of a prophetic than a priestly spirit,—some one who wanted to show that only in obedience to the God of the Hebrew could there be success in the life of a ruler. Davidson thinks they were compiled, if not by the prophet Jeremiah, at least by some one under his influence, and therefore not far from 600 B.C. The Chronicles are perhaps the most unreliable of the Old Testament records. The writer has copied from a variety of sources, as he shows himself, for a distinct purpose. He had the priestly spirit, and wanted to glorify the Levites and the temple religion. He contradicts Samuel and the Kings, and his chronology is unreliable. The books were written as late as 300 B.C., in order to make history that would give more authority to the priesthood. Ezra and Nehemiah were included with the Chronicles in the Jewish canon. They were compiled by the same hand, partly out of the writings of the men whose names they bear and partly from other sources. The Book of Esther is of unknown date and authority. It was long refused admittance into the Jewish canon, principally because it makes no reference

to God. Although containing an interesting narrative, it has no historical value. It was written to show an origin for the feast of Purim, and Kuenen calls it a romance invented to make that feast popular. Davidson places its date about 300 B.C.

If I do not say much about the Book of Job, it is not because it is not worthy of it, but simply because there is not the time. It is one of the most beautiful dramas in literature. It was written to show something of the cause of pain and suffering. But nobody knows who wrote it or when it was written.

When we come to the Psalms, it is well to remember that many of their titles were manufactured by Englishmen who formed our present version, and are of no authority whatever. Many of the Psalms, too, are composed of two or more fragments which have been arbitrarily united together. The general impression is that the Psalms are the composition of David; and yet this impression has been created without good reason. For example, Psalms which refer to the temple, that was not built until after David's death, are still piously called the Psalms of that traditional hero poet. Heilprin, the very best authority on Hebrew poetry, argues that there is the best of proof that David never wrote any of them, and Kuenen and Knappert are of the same opinion; and even Robertson Smith only attributes the seventh and eighteenth Psalms positively to David. The Psalms are, in an historical sense, a collection of the utterances of Hebrew poets through hundreds of years. They bear the name of David because, as David became the ideal hero of the Hebrew nation, it would give this collection dignity in the eyes of the Hebrews to give it his name.

They were compiled by some unknown person, but will nevertheless, many of them, be cherished as rare expressions of human emotion; and that none the less because modern scholars have shown that they were not many of them written by such a coarse and cruel man as David.

The Book of Proverbs is simply a collection of the wise sayings of the nation through hundreds of years, and was compiled by an unknown author after the return from the captivity. Nothing could show the superstitious idolatry of a book more than the attempt of men to find some reference to Jesus, and even to a Trinity, in this book.

This book itself shows that Solomon did not compose it all. Probably he did utter some proverbs; and then very naturally, after the proverbs of the nation were collected, it would be but in consistency with the custom of the past to give the collection his name.

The Book of Ecclesiastes was not written by Solomon, but by some unknown writer, in very late times, after the captivity. This book is so sceptical and selfish that none but word-worshippers would ever have considered it a part of the Word of God. The Jews did not receive it into the canon for a long period. The writer assumes to be Solomon, to give his book importance; but the deception is too apparent to any one who will read the book carefully.

Probably no book has shown the absurd position of the doctrine of infallibility better than that of Canticles. It has been interpreted to refer to Jesus as the bridegroom, and the Church as the bride. There has been an immense amount of sentimental and voluptuous sugges-

tion by means of this poem, under the thin excuse that it was in the Bible. Taken for what it is, and for what it was meant to be, it is one of the most beautiful poems of antiquity. Instead of having been written by Solomon, it was written by some one after the age of Solomon, who had no love for that magnificent voluptuary. It is a love poem, in which a Shunamite girl shows her devotion to her plain lover, in spite of the enticements of a king, who tried to tempt her into his banqueting-house.

Now, from sheer lack of time, we cannot enter into any detailed account of the prophecies. It is unfortunate, too, because all modern criticism takes its stand on the utterances of the prophets. To find the truth about the Hebrew life, we must go to the prophets, and not to the pretended histories. The prophets were the real historians of a nation in the days before critical history. Devoted to an ideal of righteousness, they uttered what they saw to be true. These prophets, of course, could not absolutely foretell future events: on many details, some of their prophecies utterly failed. But they were men of conviction, the men who could tell from certain general principles what would result from certain conduct. The old prophets of the past were merely reasoning from their large observation and clear insight, although some of them thought they were in an ecstatic state. But the point here is this, that the prophets were the most real men of the age, and unconsciously in their writings give us the life of their people. So our best history of Israel, in an uncritical age, is not in manufactured chronicles, but in the natural utterances of prophets.

Modern scholars therefore go to the eighth century B.C., and there they find such prophets as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and perhaps Nahum, about whose existence there is no doubt; and in their reported speeches they necessarily discover the real life of the nation. From that time onward there are prophets whose utterances are the best mirror of the truth. Incidentally, too, it appears that the early prophets knew nothing about a Pentateuch, and all the highly developed religion which we find mentioned in such books as Chronicles, showing conclusively that these other histories are of later origin. They are evidently talking to coarse, idolatrous people whom they are trying to lead to righteousness. From this ground, therefore, scholars weigh and judge all contradictory histories.

Now, abruptly leaving this point, let us see what we have discovered. As far as time would permit, I have given you under this point the method and results of critics in regard to the books of the Hebrew Bible. These critics are the best Biblical scholars of the age,—not infidels, not coarse, irreverent blasphemers, as ignorant people suppose, but men who study in sympathy with religion, and even accept the religion of Jesus. As a result of this examination, we discover that there is not enough known about the authorship or dates of the books of the Old Testament to give us any proof that they are infallible records. The Prophets are the most accurate records, and contain much truth; but even they have many of them been compiled or edited by unknown men: they are not all the utterances of men whose name they bear. Aside from them, we are utterly and hopelessly at sea; and from Genesis to Mala-

chi we do not know positively who wrote, in its present form, a single sentence, or exactly when the books were composed. These books came into existence through hundreds of years, in a barbarous age, when there was no such thing as scholarly criticism, when anything became sacred that seemed to come by authority or in a mysterious manner. Many of them show evidence of manipulation and contrivance to bring power to a certain element or class; and not one of them, in its entirety, has any internal, moral evidence of containing an infallible revelation. We are compelled then, in simple honesty, to conclude that we have in these books no evidence of any infallible Word of God. The general outcome of our investigation is that no one knows enough about these books to prove them infallible. Let men refuse to accept the carefully prepared results of scholars, and they are only more ignorant about the authors and dates of these books, and are in a worse condition than ever, because to refuse the results of scholarship is only to make the argument stronger that no one knows that they have any infallible authority. Scholars confess they know little; but they have given us a theory. Men who reject scholarship know nothing. Some men may feel badly, and others may become angry, when they are told this plain truth; but neither sadness nor anger furnishes any light or any argument. Men sometimes assume a great deal of piety when they declare that they do not know much about the Hebrew Bible, yet they believe everything in it to be the Word of God. But a man has no moral right to believe everything in it, if he does not know much about it. He ought to know something about it before he parades his belief.

He has no right to believe that a book is the Word of a Righteous and Infinite Power which begins by teaching the inferiority of woman, tells of a God who could deceive and change his mind, commands the meanest cruelty and upholds the destruction of enemies, calls a depraved king the man after God's own heart,—a book that is full of contradictions and absurdities, of false science and a more false morality. He has no right to uphold such a book, unless he knows very much about it. Ignorance becomes a sin when a man might be wise, and ignorance about the Bible is a very poor proof of its infallibility.

Let us sum up our investigations here. The second proposition, which we saw must be proved in order to prove the Bible the Word of God, has then no proof. That is to say, we have no proof that certain reliable and infallible men ever wrote it. The alternative proposition also fails of proof, that God gave the Bible in some mysterious way. Although we do not know who wrote the books, we do know enough to conclude that there is no divine mystery about it, but that it grew naturally, and by design and even manipulation of men. The first proposition needs but a sentence or two. Even if men knew that certain good men in the past wrote the books, there is nothing to show that what they wrote was always true or the Word of God. Admitting that they were good, they were not of such a class or of such an age that they would necessarily always speak the truth. But, as we have seen that they may not even have been good men always, we do not need to spend a moment on the question. The second proposition not having any proof, the first naturally fails of proof.

Now let us see what has become of this "infallible Word of God," of which we hear so much, and on what it rests. The old theory in regard to the support of the earth was that it rested on the back of an elephant, and that the elephant rested on a tortoise. When men asked what the last animal stood upon, they were silenced by being told that they had asked one question too many. So it is with the average support for an infallible Bible. Our English Bible is supposed to rest on a tangible original; but that original is found to consist of thousands of readings of certain ancient manuscripts. Those manuscripts rest on the decisions of fallible men, arbitrarily formed. The books they chose have no known authorship and no certain date. And our infallible Bible at last is found to rest, like the fabled tortoise, on an unknown void.

But I cannot and will not be indifferent to a question that may arise here. Some men may ask in sad sincerity, What will you stand on, and what will you do for truth, without the infallible Bible? I reply that for the present I propose to stand on the solid earth. Truth I expect to find everywhere in this great universe, through the intellect, and by means of the combined investigations of all wise men. Some of it is in these old writings, and in other Bibles, in the writings of scientists and historians and poets. Truth found everywhere is the only real Word of God. It is wonderful what superstitious reverence men have for a book. Any man is inspired who tells the truth. If a preacher were to read the most devotional poems of Whittier or Tennyson or some Hindu, in some churches, on a Sunday morning, some men would be shocked, although they might have

infinitely more tenderness and reverence than some verses from an Old Testament. Some men think they feel exceedingly pious when they hear a preacher read in a monotonous way that some old patriarch begat sons and daughters and then died, and would feel hurt to hear a really religious literature. But I know not why a record of a babe born to Abraham is any more holy than the story of a babe born in the nineteenth century.

Why not confess that the Old Testament is not the Word of God? The most orthodox preacher dare not read one-half of it in his pulpit. If he did, he would soon gain a reputation for vulgarity.

But have I not stated clearly what the Old Testament is? Already we have seen what it is by studying its growth. It is not the Word of God, but it is the literature of one of the most vigorous of ancient nations. When we get rid of the idea of its infallibility, too, men will prize it as a record of the development of the God-idea in that line of human history in which we happen to be born. But it is not an infallible, religious book. Not to speak of parts that are irreligious and immoral, it was never intended to be an entirely religious book. It is partly unreligious; that is, certain parts have no direct reference to religion, and were never intended to have. It is the literature of a vigorous nation for hundreds of years. It is the literature of its science, (none the less science because now proved false), of its laws, of its history, just as of its religion. It is true that, because of the idea that the God of the tribe was also its civil ruler, religion is often mixed up with law; but, strictly speaking, it is just as much a civil as a religious record.

Bind up in one book the sermons of Channing and the

prayers of Parker, along with the Constitution of the United States and the poems of Longfellow and the New York *Tribune*, and you have in American literature an analogy of the Old Testament. Its grandest climax is the word of prophets who speak of an Eternal who makes for righteousness; but it is also the romantic and legal and civil literature. As ancient literature, it is not likely surpassed, and far excels the New Testament. There are a dozen quotations from it in the best literature where there is one from the last, because it was written by the most active men of a most vigorous race. When we are once free from all superstitious reverence, we are glad to do it justice. Its love poems, *as* love poems, are many of them most exquisitely sweet and beautiful. The devotion of Ruth, the faithfulness of the Shunamite maiden, the expression of the love for Jonathan, surpassing the love of woman, are among the most tender and rapturous expressions of the love that is stronger than death, which could be found in any literature or idiom. Its war songs, *as* war songs, have the real ring of a trumpet; and its prophecies, as expressions of despair or hope, have the sad, plaintive wailing of an Æolian harp.

The personal God of modern Christendom has a touch of earth in comparison with the Eternal of the more advanced Hebrews. Jahveh, whatever else he is, is a being of dignity, when mentioned by the best of the prophets, and brings a thrill of inspiration. He sits on the floods, he makes the cedars of Lebanon tremble, he walks on the great deep, he is the secret behind all reverence and romance,—the one strange mystery in deep, pure music; and he himself it is who is the weirdness of

brooks and hills and mountains. There is so much depth in the cry of the Hebrew poet after the living God that, in spite of what is accidental and false in the theology, much of it still fittingly expresses our soul-hunger after infinite life and fulness, after light and love and an eternal pity.

THE BIBLE: THE NEW TESTAMENT.

WE find in society a belief that the Bible is the infallible Word of God. There is no way to discover the truth on that question except by analyzing the book in the light of known facts, and then forming a conclusion based on those facts.

Unless, too, we have given this subject special study within a few years, it is not best for any of us to take it for granted that we have always known everything on the subject. As one single example of the necessity of changing some ideas to-day from those of even forty years ago, it is worth while to remember that the manuscript which is now supposed to be the oldest one of the New Testament was not discovered until 1844 A.D., and that this manuscript differs in many particulars from other ones which have been used as originals. As I said in considering the Old Testament, many most interesting points must be passed over.

Our main argument does not rest, however, on the study of unessential details. There is no better way in treating the New Testament than to begin at the English version and trace its origin backwards. What we seek to know is what the New Testament is, and whether its origin is of such a kind as to prove its infallibility. Our search here assumes, too, a more distinct form. Our problem to-day is much simplified. We do

not need to stop to consider the question in detail, whether, even if we had the exact words of Jesus, they would on all questions be infallible. That question will more logically be considered when we come to examine the Church doctrine about Jesus. The believer in the traditional theology, however, must not only desire to find this New Testament reliable, because it gives him a record of the life of a great teacher, but every part must be proved the very Word of God. It is assumed, even by the publishers of our Bible, that we have an exact translation of an infallible original. Open almost any New Testament, and you will find these words on the title-page, "The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, translated out of the original Greek." Now, a rationalist might deny that it was an infallible Word of God, even if we had an original "Testament" of Jesus. But to a traditional believer it becomes essential to show that we have, or even can have, the true report of the life and utterance of Jesus. We must then consider first and principally whether the New Testament is really a record of the teachings of Jesus, so correct as to make it infallible.

I. We must first, then, consider the foundation for our English New Testament. It is known to all of you, of course, that the original New Testament, if found, must be in the Greek language. Now, when we leave our English Testament, we discover that the first printed Greek Testament was the Complutensian Polyglott, made in 1514 A.D. This was made from modern manuscripts, however, and was full of errors. It is a significant fact that the spurious passage, I. John v., 7, appeared in the third edition of this version for the first

time. That is the passage about the three witnesses, (or "Trinity"), in heaven, and interpolated fifteen hundred years after Jesus, to uphold a doctrine, gives an example of how doctrines were manufactured. Servetus was burned principally because he did not believe in the doctrine of the "Trinity"; and yet no one text has done more to uphold that doctrine than the one which is now known to have been manufactured nearly fifteen centuries after the assumed date. The oldest known manuscripts of the Greek New Testament are believed to date back to the fourth century. There are five manuscripts which are considered by scholars to be the most reliable and valuable. Of course there are hundreds of manuscripts of different ages, containing different parts of the Bible. In the earlier manuscripts, the uncial letters are used; that is, all the letters are capitals and of the same size, and written for the most part without any divisions or stops. The cursive or "running" kind of writing is of later origin. Now, as I can only take time to notice the essential part of this question, we need not notice particularly any but the uncial manuscripts. We will have the substance of all, too, because all questions are now settled among scholars by referring to five or six of the oldest manuscripts, to which we must briefly refer.

(1) The Codex Alexandrinus is referred to the fifth century, and contains nearly all the Old Testament and all the New, with the exception of nearly all of Matthew's Gospel, about two chapters in the Fourth Gospel, and a portion of I. Corinthians. The books are not arranged the same as in our translation, and it also contains one Epistle of Clement and a portion of another.

(2) Codex Ephraemi is in the National Library of

Paris, and is a palimpsest dating also from the fifth century. In critical authority, this manuscript is considered next in value to the two oldest which we have yet to notice, but it does not contain II. Thessalonians or II. John.

(3) The Codex Bezae, presented by Theodore Beza to the University of Cambridge, dates from the sixth century, and only contains the four Gospels and the Acts in Greek and Latin on opposite pages, with a few verses from III. John. It shows evidence of interpolations and manipulation.

(4) One manuscript, which has always until recently been considered the most valuable is the Codex Vaticanus. It is kept in the Vatican Library at Rome, and dates from the fourth century. It contains nearly all of the Old Testament, and the New as far as Hebrew ix., 14. It has belonged to the Vatican Library since the fifteenth century, and its earlier history is unknown. It was a long time before the world was allowed to see it; but it is now published by papal authority.

(5) The most interesting, and, along with the one in the Vatican, the most valuable authority, is that of the Codex Sinaiticus. This manuscript was discovered in 1844, by Tischendorf, in the Greek convent of Saint Catherine, on the range of Mount Sinai. He found it in a waste-basket full of torn manuscripts. He obtained possession then of forty-three sheets, but was not permitted to take more at that time. It was not until 1859, and then only by the influence of Alexander II. of Russia, that he was allowed to see the other portions. This manuscript contains the New Testament entire, and the Epistle of Barnabas, and Pastor of Hermas, and

also the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. The titles to books in this manuscript are very brief. It is supposed to be the oldest manuscript in existence. Its discovery, more than any other one event, has done much to create the necessity for a new translation of the New Testament.

We have then found our first basis for the English Testament, which is supposed to contain the Word of God, or the Word of Jesus about God. Let us consider the essential facts discovered up to this point. When we wish to find a rounded, complete original on which to base our New Testament, we find that the nearest we come to it is a Greek manuscript discovered in a Greek convent, as late as 1844. There are, of course, thousands of copies of different Christian Scriptures; there are other manuscripts of great importance to the student. By comparison, the body of the original may of course be approximately found. But we are seeking an infallible Word of God. As students of ancient literature, we may find enough to give us general satisfaction. But our salvation may hang on a text, and we are never quite sure we have the exact text. We are told, for instance, that we must believe in the Deity of Jesus. But we have already seen how one favorite text in support of that Deity, or the "Trinity," came into existence. As an illustration, let us look at one other incident. The next strongest support of the doctrine of the Deity of Jesus is that in I. Timothy iii., 16, containing the expression, "God was manifest in the flesh," referring to Jesus. But it turns out that this was, too, the work of some copyist. The text ought to read, "He who was manifested in the flesh." The process of making a Bible to suit a theology is quite interesting.

The Codex Alexandrinus is the only one of the uncial manuscripts which has the word "God" in this sentence. All that was necessary for a copyist to do was to make a straight mark over or in a letter, and "*he who*" would be changed into "*God*," and Jesus be turned into the Deity. If this can be done in one instance, why may it not in another? On such a vital question, it is not enough to say that a few mistakes are of no consequence. The errors are most likely to be made on vital questions. Hundreds of men have been banished or murdered because they did not believe in the divinity of Jesus. But we have discovered the two most palpable errors on that very question. Besides, we want the Word of God, and nothing else. But in almost all these manuscripts, even in the Codex Sinaiticus, we find such books as those of Clement and the Pastor of Hermas. If we can only be saved by the Word of God, why do not our modern revisers give us Barnabas and the Pastor of Hermas, which are found in the most valuable manuscript in existence? How do we know that there is not something in those books as necessary for our salvation as in Philemon or the Apocalypse?

Then, in regard to the discovery of the Codex Sinaiticus. Every one who loves literature, and who honors studious zeal, will give credit to young Tischendorf, who, at the age of twenty-nine, discovered that manuscript in the Greek convent. It would be hypercritical, most surely, to ignore the value of that discovery. But this is a question of infallibility on the most important subjects, and not merely the value of an ancient manuscript. As a general proof of a general literature, it brings valuable authority; but will it do on questions of salvation?

All revisions are compared to-day with that manuscript. But will this do for an infallible test for eternal salvation? A young man finds some sheets of a manuscript in a convent, eighteen hundred years after Jesus. Not till fifteen years afterwards does he even catch a glimpse of the remainder of that manuscript. Honest scholar as he is, too, even Tischendorf has difficult work in finding the original in that manuscript, amid all the alterations and corrections that are spread over it. Over texts in the Bible, men have quarrelled, husbands and wives have separated, and condemnations of death and eternal damnation have been pronounced; and yet the latest crucial test is an explanation of a manuscript found by a young scholar in 1844 in a waste-basket in a convent. How do we know, too, that other convents may not have other manuscripts that will still change the beliefs of men. The manuscripts of the Vatican and of Tischendorf leave out some things in which our grandfathers believed. If we throw out portions of this New Testament which our ancestors believed as infallible as the rest, how do we know that new discoveries may not cause men to eliminate something else in the days of our children? We are forced then to say that the basis of our New Testament is too feeble and precarious for us to accept it as infallible, or to build upon it the hope and joy and morality of our lives.

II. Thus far, we have been considering the question whether, even if there were some fixed canon of New Testament Scriptures, we are sure we have correct manuscripts of it. We must next consider whether or not there ever was a canon formed in such a way as to be authoritative. We would naturally suppose from gen-

eral beliefs on this question that some time, not long after the time of Jesus, apostles and other prominent leaders in the new movement absolutely decided upon something called the New Testament Scriptures. As an historical fact, however, no body of men ever decided in a council that certain writings were canonical and others uncanonical, until the Council of Laodicea, 363 A.D. Indeed, many suppose that the decision of that council on the subject is a forgery of later date, and that there was never a real decision by a council in regard to the sacredness of our present New Testament until the Council of Carthage, 397 A.D. But, admitting the correctness of the canon in the first-mentioned council, it was three hundred and sixty-three years after Jesus, in an age when there was no printing-press, no such thing as historical criticism, when the air was full of floating tradition, when there were different parties in the Church all trying to prove themselves the legitimate followers of Jesus, before there was any decision as to the canonical books. Even this council threw out our Revelation, or the Apocalypse. Now, our next step backward must be to the writings of the apostolic and Christian Fathers. By the Fathers, we mean the writers who lived the nearest the age of Jesus and the apostles. We must go to the best writers of that day to find what they thought about a New Testament, if there were such a thing.

Clement of Rome, 97 A.D., did not know any such thing as a canon of the New Testament. When he speaks of "Scriptures," he refers alone to the Old Testament writings. He never refers to any Gospels; and, although he speaks of some of the Epistles, he did not speak of them as of equal authority with the Old Testa-

ment. The Pastor of Hermas, written perhaps 130 A.D., and which is itself found in the Sinaitic Codex, contains allusions to the words of Jesus; but it has no quotations, and does not recognize any book of the New Testament as sacred "Scriptures." The writer of Barnabas makes one apparent quotation from Matthew, but Dr. Davidson considers its genuineness doubtful. Neither Ignatius nor Polycarp makes any reference to the Four Gospels. Justin Martyr (150 A.D.) quotes passages which may be found in the synoptic Gospels, but he also quotes from other writings not found in our New Testament, without any suggestion of special authority in either case. He also quotes from "Memoirs of the Apostles," showing that even at his day there were ancient writings which had not yet assumed their later form; but he does not apply to even these the title "Sacred Scriptures." Papias directly declares that Mark's Gospel is "incomplete and without order," and puts the oral tradition of the day above written books. This is enough to suggest what the Fathers thought of the New Testament writings. Some individuals endeavored to fix a canon for themselves. In the last half of the second century, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian each made a canon for himself. But Irenæus left out Hebrews, Jude, James, II. Peter, and III. John. Clement cited Barnabas as an Epistle, and called the Pastor of Hermas divine. Tertullian's canon only included as authoritative the Gospels, Acts, thirteen Epistles of Paul, the Apocalypse, and I. John. Much importance has been attached to the canon of Muratori, which was supposed to have been made 170 A.D. This, however, was not discovered till about 1740 in the Ambrosian Library

at Milan. The fragment is defective both at the beginning and at the end. It speaks of such books as the Epistle "to the Laodiceans and to the Alexandrians," and leaves out Hebrews, I. and II. Peter, and James. Theophilus of Antioch, 180 A.D., is the first who refers to the writings as sacred and inspired. The most complete canon made by any individual is that of Eusebius in 340 A.D.; and even he leaves out the Apocalypse, and divides the rest into writings "*generally received*," "*controverted*," and "*heretical*."

It must have been evident to you, in this survey, that there were, in the early Church, many other writings as well as those we now have in our New Testament. Time will not permit me to give a catalogue of all these writings. There were two kinds of apocryphal writings,—those which were by many of the Fathers considered as sacred as the books at last admitted into the canon, and those which were never considered specially sacred by any sect.

It is now time for me to sum up our observations on this point. I could have said much more, but the facts would only have been in the same direction. First, then, we find that there was no such thing as our present New Testament, authorized by any council, till 363 A.D. Back of that, the first single church Father, who even approximated to our present canon, was an unreliable historian, Eusebius, as late as 340 A.D.; and he left out our Apocalypse. Not one single book of our New Testament was called "Scriptures" by any Christian Father until 170 A.D.; and there was no collection of New Testament literature like the present one, supposed to possess divine authority, until near the close of the second

century. Up to the time of Eusebius, other books, like those of Clement and Barnabas, were read with just as much belief in their authority as those in our present canon. Our solid New Testament is therefore found to rest on the arbitrary decision of a council held at least three hundred years after Jesus. That decision rests largely on the opinions of Eusebius; back of that, every man made a canon for himself; back of that lies the chaos, into which we must now enter.

III. We come now to our next step backward in the history of the New Testament. This point will be the last of our investigation, and it is quite important. We will consider now whether there is anything about the history and authorship of the individual books themselves, which forces us to accept them as the Word of God or the teachings of Jesus. Or, to put it in plainer words, even if we have no rounded, complete canon before the time mentioned, is there not enough authority in the single books of Matthew and Mark and John, and Romans and Galatians, and all the others, to make us accept them as authoritative records? Now, in order to answer that question in the affirmative, it is necessary to show that these several books of the New Testament were written by such men and at such a time as to assure us that they contain records that are infallible concerning even the teachings and life of Jesus. Or, to put it negatively, if none of these were written by any man who ever saw or heard Jesus, if they were not in existence until so late a date that they could not have been written by eye-witnesses, we cannot have an infallible record. To that subject let us direct our thoughts a little. On the most of the books of the New Testa-

ment, I shall be very brief, merely making necessary statements, as I wish to dwell as much as possible on essential points. Let us begin then with the Epistles of Paul.

There are fourteen Epistles attributed to Paul in our version. Of these, only four are universally acknowledged by scholars to be his writings. These four, then,—Romans, I. and II. Corinthians, and Galatians,—we may accept as the writings of Paul, without any discussion. There are six more, over which there is a great difference of opinion, all of them being accepted as Paul's with much doubt by the most careful critics. These are Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, and I. and II. Thessalonians. Now, if we could take the time, we could discover the reason why some of these six, if not all, are not likely the writings of Paul. Even a writer so cautious in regard to the New Testament as W. Robertson Smith says that it would demand considerable explanation to show that Colossians and Ephesians have any relation to the other Pauline Epistles. It is only necessary here, however, to suggest how scholars come to some of their conclusions. Knowing that titles are often given to books without any original authority, but simply to give them dignity, they begin to examine their contents. Then, by examination, they discover that the style and general teaching of such books as Ephesians and Colossians are so different from the accepted writings of Paul as to make it improbable that they were written by the same person. It is, however, not absolutely necessary, for our investigation, to settle this question here either way. But, admitting that these six books may possibly have been written by Paul, we

have now ten Pauline Epistles, none of them written earlier than 58 A.D. The other four Epistles which bear his name—that is, the letters to Timothy and Titus and the Epistle to the Hebrews—are most certainly not the writings of Paul. The general style of the pastoral Epistles is different from that of Paul, so also is much of the teachings. References are made to heresies which did not exist until after Paul's day. Davidson thinks that the author of them was a Pauline Christian, who lived at Rome during the first part of the second century. In regard to the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is only necessary to say that it was not accepted as genuine by the early Christian Fathers. It was never received positively into the canon by a council, as one of the fourteen Epistles of Paul, until the one at Carthage, 419 A.D.; and, in the oldest manuscript, Paul's name is not attached to the title. We have then at most only ten Epistles which it is at all likely were written by Paul, and some of them are in doubt. The authors of the other four are unknown.

The Epistle of James comes next in order. This was not received as canonical until 397 A.D. It is without doubt one of the most beautiful and true writings in the New Testament. It upholds in general a strict and consistent morality in opposition to an exaggerated faith, but no one knows what James was the author.

The I. Epistle of Peter has been a subject of controversy among scholars. The internal evidence is all against the Petrine authorship. The letter assumes to be written from *Babylon*; but whether that means Rome as a mystical Babylon, or Babylonia, there is no evidence that Peter was ever in either place. The best

evidence against the theory that it was written by Peter is that it was written in the best Greek, while his native dialect was Aramæan. It is well known, too, from Paul's writings, that Peter leaned toward a Jewish Christianity; that is, a Christianity with the old forms. As we shall see, there was undoubtedly a controversy in the early Church between the Jewish Christians, headed by Peter and James, and the liberals headed by Paul. But this Epistle is written in the Pauline spirit, and was therefore likely written by some one who wished to reconcile the two parties and make Peter seem to uphold the broader theology. Westcott finds no trace of it before 170 A.D. The II. Epistle of Peter was rejected by nearly all the early Fathers. Even according to Jerome, it was not believed to be the writing of Peter; and it was only accepted as canonical in the fourth century.

When we come to the I. Epistle of John, we are utterly at sea. It bears the title "John," but nobody knows what "John." The Epistle itself gives no internal proof on the question. The best critics do not agree among themselves. Perhaps the weight of authority is toward the conclusion that the same author wrote this Epistle and the Fourth Gospel, but the conclusion is equally strong that such an author did not write the Apocalypse. But, where there is no positive proof, we cannot spend time in conjecture. The II. and III. Epistles of John do not assume to be written by the apostle, but by some elder or presbyter, probably John of Ephesus. They were long refused a place among the sacred Scriptures, and were not generally accepted by the Fathers.

The Epistle of Jude was perhaps written by Jude, the brother of Jesus, or some one representing him. That it was not by the apostle of that name is evident from the manner in which he speaks of the apostles, as if he were not one of them. Davidson places its date about 80 A.D.; but there is only evidence to show that it was written in the "last times," after the most of the apostles were dead, and the exact date cannot be fixed. It is at best but a short Epistle, and throws little light on the general teachings of Jesus.

The last book of the New Testament is the Apocalypse, called in our version "The Revelation of St. John." Justin Martyr wrote of "a certain man whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation made to him," of certain future events. Both Clement and Origen, to whom its doctrines were distasteful, attributed this book to the apostle. There is no doubt that many of the early Christians expected a speedy second coming of Jesus. That hope is the best expressed in this writing. But as Jesus did not return there arose at last a willingness to throw doubts upon the genuineness of this book. Davidson says that there is as good external authority that John wrote this book as for any of the Epistles of Paul. But all we need to notice is that it was received in the early Church as the writing of an apostle, on better evidence than that of any other book, excepting, perhaps, the first four Epistles of Paul.

We come next to the Acts of the Apostles, or, as one manuscript has it, "Acting of the Apostles." This is one of the most interesting books of the New Testament, and, if true history, would settle forever the ques-

tion of miracles affirmatively. But it contains perhaps as little historical accuracy as Chronicles in the Old Testament, and was written for the same essential reason, in order to make a history to suit a theory. The Tübingen critics, agreeing here with Strauss, start with the philosophical axiom that any record which contains an account of miracles, by that very fact proves itself unhistorical. According to that axiom, the Acts are proved unhistorical without any other criticism, because not only does the book contain accounts of miracles of the most impossible kind, but these miracles were performed not even by Jesus, but by men like Peter and Paul. We need not here settle this question in this way, but can simply take up the external and internal evidence. The book is not a record of the actions of the apostles, but principally of two men, Peter and Paul. It is generally believed that the book was written by the same person as the third Gospel, but that is no proof that it was written by Luke, the companion of Paul. The first direct evidence of the existence of such a book is contained in a letter of the churches of Vienne and Lyons, A.D. 177. No reference is made to Luke as its author until near the close of the second century, when it is referred to by Irenæus. After that, other Fathers refer to it as associated with the name of Luke; that is to say, at and after the close of the second century. It could not have been written before 120 A.D., long after the death of Luke. There are internal evidences that it is not reliable history. Let me suggest a fact or two. We have accepted Galatians as reliable; but, if it is reliable, the Acts is unreliable. In Galatians, Paul says that after he was converted he did not go to

Jerusalem for three years, but went into Arabia; but in Acts it is written that he went up at once to the brethren, and began to preach.

In Acts, we find speeches from Peter and Paul almost in the same language: in Galatians, we find that the apostles were suspicious of Paul, and that Paul withstood Peter to the face, because he was a time server and tried to compromise with the formalism of the Jewish Christians. From Paul's writings, we learn that there were two parties in the early Church. The Jewish party was headed by Peter and James: it wished to preserve the old Jewish forms in the early Church. Paul was the head of a liberal party, who believed in one universal Church, in which there was to be no distinction between the Jew and Greek, and in which the believer was to stand forth in the liberty of Christ, free from all form. All through Paul's writings, we learn that there was a progressive and a conservative tendency in the early Church. We learn that there were divisions, and that one said he was of Paul, and another that he was of Peter, and another that he was of Christ. But, long years after, a writer wishes to break down these divisions; and so he writes the Acts to show that Peter and Paul were in sympathy. This writer of Acts perhaps took up some traditions and some written records, and edited them in such a way as to have a pacifying effect on the Church of the second century. Perhaps he had before him a written record of some companion of Paul, as a portion of the book is written in the third person and a portion in the plural "we." The "we" portions may have been from the diary of some companion of Paul, and incorporated into the other parts

of the book. There is a basis of fact in the reported travels of Paul; but when we read speeches from men of such individuality as Peter and Paul, full of the same commonplace, we have a suspicion that they were made largely by the editor himself.

We now approach the inner citadel of this New Testament, and the part most sacred to all who honor Jesus. Let us begin with the Gospel of John, or, as critics call it, "The Fourth Gospel." Now, the importance of this Gospel lies in this: that, *if* it is indeed a Gospel written by an apostle who was a companion of Jesus, it is invaluable as a record of the life and sayings of that great teacher. It has always been considered, too, by many, the most spiritual and interesting of all the Gospels, and by some has been called "The Heart of Christ." But the important question for us to consider here is whether or not it *is* the writing of the apostle who lived and died during the first century. The first conspicuous fact we have on the subject is that Justin Martyr, who wrote about 150 A.D., never mentions any such Gospel or any other Gospels; that is to say, the most prominent of the Christian Fathers, who is continually quoting from the sayings of Jesus, knows no Gospel written by the Apostle John. Justin does refer to "Memoirs of the Apostles," thus showing that there were certain records in existence from which he quoted; but he makes no allusion to our Gospels.

It is well known that there were many Gospels in existence in the early Church. There were the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel of Peter, and many others which have not been preserved to us, but no Gospel of John, prior to Justin Martyr. Moreover, Justin

quotes expressions of Jesus which are not in our Gospels at all, which would be inconsistent if he had some such canonical Gospel as that of "John" before him. The first writer who mentions a Gospel of John is Theophilus, who did not write before 170 A.D. Efforts have been made to show that "Barnabas," the "Pastor of Hermas," and "Polycarp" use language found in the Fourth Gospel; but, as they do not refer to any such Gospel, it only implies that there were original traditions which they all quoted more or less. But, as E. A. Abbott well suggests, if this Gospel was written by "the disciple whom Jesus loved," it is strange that Justin quotes fifty passages which may be found in Matthew for one that can be found in the Fourth Gospel. Irenæus, at the close of the second century, condemns the misuse of the Fourth Gospel; but, if it existed in Justin Martyr's day, it shows that either he did not know of its existence or did not consider it reliable. As Justin Martyr speaks of "Memoirs of the Apostles," and never of John's Gospel, as his teachings show less development than this Gospel, it follows that either he did not know of such a Gospel, or else did not consider it the work of an apostle. Now, I have intentionally not taken my statements from the most radical writers of our day, but from Christians. One of the most careful but radical writers of our day, the author of *Supernatural Religion*, has examined every extant passage of any writer who lived between 70 A.D. and 170 A.D., and has proved that no writer quotes from any such work as our four Gospels, much less from the Fourth Gospel. Matthew Arnold, who does not agree with all the conclusions of *Supernatural Religion*, says that

the author has absolutely proved his case. That matter, he says, is forever settled, that up to 170 A.D. there is no evidence that any Gospel attributed to John was in existence. Some critics have attempted to reply to *Supernatural Religion*; but they utterly fail to show a single error in the author's main argument, in regard to lack of reference in the Christian Fathers to the Johannine authorship.* Moreover, the internal evidence against John's authorship is even stronger. Apologists claim that they find passages in Justin Martyr similar to those in the Fourth Gospel, although forced to admit that Justin does not mention John. But similar passages to those found in *both* the Gospel and Justin can be found in the writings of Philo, an Alexandrian Jew, who wrote not far from 40 A.D. That is, Philo uses expressions about the personification of Wisdom and about the "Logos" (the "Word") which are almost literally found in the Fourth Gospel and Justin. Justin did not quote from the Fourth Gospel, but the pretended John and Justin both quoted from Philo. Philo was an Alexandrian Jew; that is, he knew the Hebrew literature about the personification of Wisdom, and the Greek theory of the Logos, the emanation from Deity. In his mind, those two theories combine. The Logos or Wisdom is the outward expression or revelation of essential Deity. Along comes some writer afterward,

* Since writing the above, a scholarly book, entitled *History of Christian Religion to A.D. 200*, by Charles B. Waite, has come into my possession. The author has examined every passage of the Fathers relating to this question, and concludes that not one of the Gospels was written before the second century. He says in support of his positions: "A single well-attested passage from any writer would disprove the assertion. Why is no such passage produced? Simply because it cannot be found."

and wants to show in the Fourth Gospel that the "Logos" is Jesus himself. To put it in the plainest words, the Fourth Gospel is the philosophy of Philo applied to Jesus by some advanced Christian. That is the best evidence that John never wrote it. He was a Jewish Christian convert without education. The Fourth Gospel is full of the Greek philosophy, and was written by a learned Christian, who applied the Alexandrian philosophy to Jesus. John was too narrow to take in such a philosophy. We learn from Poly-crates that John was accustomed to wear the Jewish mitre, thus showing that he was not freed from narrow Judaism. We have already seen that there is good authority that the belief existed in the early Church that John wrote the Apocalypse. But the writer of the Apocalypse did not write the Fourth Gospel. It is not essential, however, to show that John wrote the Apocalypse; for, even if he did not, it would not prove that he wrote the Gospel. Moreover, if the utterances reported in the Fourth Gospel are true reports from Jesus, then the other three Gospels are unreliable. The long, labored sentences of the first do not agree with the short, terse utterances of the synoptics. Justin says of the sentences of Jesus: "Brief and concise were the sentences he uttered, for he was no sophist, but his word was the power of God"; but the sentences in the Fourth Gospel are not brief and concise, but long and intricate. Moreover, it is not possible to tell where Jesus ends and the editor begins. The writer of the Fourth Gospel never mentions the name of John, but only the disciple whom Jesus loved. But this assumed modesty is surely not that of the son of Zebedee, for ac-

According to the records, Jesus reproved the two brothers once for their audacity. For these and other reasons, the Fourth Gospel was not written by John, but by some advanced thinker not much before 150 A.D., who wrote under the guise of the name of an apostle, in order to give his writings authority.

The first three Gospels are called Synoptic Gospels, because they take a "view together." They have the same general teaching, although differing essentially from the Fourth Gospel. There is a great difference of opinion as to which Gospel has the precedence, some thinking that Mark is the original document, and others that Mark is a compilation from the other two. This point, however, is not essential. The point that is essential is that the first Christian writer to connect our present Gospel with the name "Matthew" was Appollinaris, Bishop of Hierapolis, 178 A.D. There are passages quoted like those in this Gospel, before that time, but this is the first actual reference. Now, we know from the early Fathers that Matthew did write some Scriptures. Papias, about 150 A.D., says Matthew composed some "oracles in the Hebrew dialect." But the best Greek scholars, since Erasmus, say that our Gospel is not a translation, and must have been written in Greek. Our present Greek Gospel was not therefore written by Matthew; but Matthew probably wrote some discourses in the Hebrew tongue, and some unknown writer has used them and other traditions, and given the name of Matthew to his book.

When we come to examine the authority for our second Gospel, we do not find any distinct reference to any writings by Mark before Papias, 150 A.D. Now,

Papias writes that Mark wrote down the sayings of Peter without orderly arrangement, and in the Hebrew or Aramaic dialect. But this does not refer to the present Gospel, which is written with as much order as any others, and is written in Greek. The point here is that Mark did likely report Peter; but the second Gospel is a later document, and only has extracts from the original. Irenæus speaks of *what was preached by Peter*, but he does not call Mark a Gospel. There were perhaps writings of Peter which were used partially as a basis.

Before entering upon the examination of Luke's Gospel, it is important to notice its introduction. The author proposes to write an account "in order," and implies that many before had taken it in hand to write, in order, what was believed among them, and had failed. He implies that up to his time there had been no Gospel made by "eye-witnesses." We have no reason to believe anything more, however, from the fact that it is called Luke, than that some one used that name in order to give the book authority. The earliest Fathers have no quotations from it, and make no allusion to any such Gospel. Irenæus, near the close of the second century, is the first writer who mentions such a Gospel. The book itself does not even state that Luke wrote it. It is probably made up of a variety of documents. I have taken care not to build any argument upon uncertainties, and have therefore not given the dates of the three synoptics. Critics differ most radically as to their dates, and it would require volumes to discuss such a question properly. Some critics fix the date of Matthew, for instance, as late as 134 A.D. Davidson dates Mark

120 A.D.; and Keim, a conservative critic on this point, does not place Luke earlier than 90 A.D., but says it precedes Mark and John. I have given you the opinions of some of the best critics, that they were likely compiled during the first quarter of the second century. But the point that is essential, and that is absolutely proved, is that neither Justin Martyr, nor Polycarp, nor Ignatius, nor Clement of Rome, nor any writer before 150 A.D., makes any allusion to any one of our present four Gospels.

Now, we come to one of the most interesting hypotheses of modern times in regard to the best records of Jesus. This hypothesis has been made to assume definite shape by Prof. Edwin A. Abbott, master of London School, in his article on "The Gospels" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, although the principle had been suggested by others. It is the theory of The Triple Tradition. We find so much late philosophy in the Fourth Gospel as to make it unreliable. But, in examining the three synoptics,—Matthew, Mark, and Luke,—we find that their writers have all quoted from some previous tradition. If we can find, therefore, something on which they all agree, we will most likely have something from some original source, written or oral. Now, in the three Gospels, the very same words and phrases are often used in such a way as to show that the writers have quoted from some original source. If one writer has something which is not in the others, it is suggestive of a later growth. But, when three of the most ancient writers give the same record, we have the nearest to the original tradition. The Triple Tradition is perhaps the best record men will ever find of what

Jesus said and thought, but even that is subject to the mistakes of reporters. Men did not always understand him when alive, much less would they after he was dead. But I have no doubt that before many years we will have The Triple Tradition edited in such a shape as to have in a tangible form what those the nearest to Jesus reported of his sayings and doings.

It is time now to sum up some of the results of our investigations. I have told you frankly where there is any uncertainty. But do not let my frankness lead you to make a mistake. Our argument and conclusion are not built upon any of the unsettled questions of scholars. Our fundamental positions are builded upon undeniable facts. A doubt as to the authorship of some single book, or its date, is not so bound up with our investigation as to invalidate any conclusion.

Have we then an infallible record of the life and sayings of Jesus, or, in other words, a revelation from God, in our New Testament or a correct translation of that New Testament? First, we find that we have no absolutely correct translation of the ancient writings. We go back and find that we have not an authentic and genuine record of the life and teachings of Jesus. We are only sure (even comparatively) that we have a record of two men who ever saw Jesus. One of them wrote the Apocalypse, the book of all others skipped by all rational people when they look to the New Testament authority: the other perhaps wrote the letter called Jude, which has little about Jesus. We are sure that Paul wrote four, and perhaps ten, Epistles. But Paul never saw Jesus, and never heard a word from his lips. Paul, it is true, says he saw Jesus; but Jesus was dead at the

time, and had been for years, and Paul tells us in other places what he means by "seeing." He was once caught up into the heavens, and "saw unutterable things." That is, he was in an ecstatic state, and had grand conceptions or visions. So also he "saw" Jesus, in the same sense; that is, he had an intense consciousness that he had the true religion. But he did not have this consciousness for years, but for a long time persecuted the followers of Jesus. Would he have so done, if there were proofs undeniable that Jesus had risen from the dead? Paul's writings, therefore, are not the words of Jesus, much less the word of God.

The very best record we have, then, is that of the unknown writers of the first three Gospels, none of which had any historical recognition till after 150 A.D. It is true we have found a Triple Tradition which is exceedingly valuable; but, as we do not know absolutely who are responsible for that tradition, we have nowhere any infallible record.

The New Testament is, therefore, a most precious collection of the most ancient writings of a religious movement that has very much affected our civilization and lives. Although it does not equal the Hebrew Scriptures in literary style or intellectual vigor, it contains some of the most sublime precepts and beautiful sentiments. It gives the best record we have of a man who, in his idealism and his noble, self-sacrificing spirit, has won the hearts of men.

Now let us take just a glance at the Revised Version. Certain English clergymen began to revise the New Testament, and at last asked the aid of American scholars. We have now the result of their labors. Of

course, any man who wants the best translation of such an original will more likely use the version of our best modern scholars. We have better scholars now than lived in 1611, and besides have older manuscripts. Just as we would wish the best translation of Homer or the best reading of Shakspeare, so should we seek the best version of these ancient writings. We cannot however become entirely enthusiastic over the revision. In the first place, our American scholars were never anything more than an advisory committee; that is, the English committee was the court of last resort. You will find an appendix to the revision, showing that in many places our American revisers were not satisfied. Fortunately, the titles of chapters have been thrown out, and the arbitrary divisions into chapters have been omitted; but, against the wish of our revisers, English conservatism prevailed, and the "Saint" is placed before the proper names in the Gospels ("Saint Matthew," for example) without the authority of the best manuscripts. But there was too much respect, in the beginning, to old prejudices. It is not, and does not assume to be, a new translation from original documents, but only a revision of a revision made in 1611. But this new translation is to do an immense amount of good in many directions. We need not expect that it will obliterate all doctrines contrary to our modern ideas, because there is no evidence that the original ideas were correct. But some corrections are made, as we have seen; and it is throwing some light into this doctrine of infallibility. For instance, we hear much about following the Word of Christ. And yet there is not much doubt that Jesus never had a doxology to his "Lord's Prayer," although

orthodox believers to-day are becoming angry, and are declaring that they will use that doxology. That is to say, they are not so anxious, after all, for the Word of Christ, as to say over a doxology that was undoubtedly interpolated by the Catholic Church.* So it is not Jesus they love, after all, so much as tradition. Another benefit of the new version is that it is bound to break down the blind worship of a book. Men are beginning to realize that, if their Bible can be revised, after all it cannot be so very infallible. This book-worship has been one of the greatest obstacles in the way of human progress; but the new revision is teaching men that the so-called Word of God is a human composition, and they will soon refuse to submit to be terrified and threatened by some wild assertion of sensational preachers, taken from a book.

We began to examine a single book. Our conclusion is that this is not a book, but two collections of writings bound together, without any logical reason,—not even two books, but a collection of fragments of literature, gathered up during hundreds of years of an uncivilized and credulous age. It has long been asserted that there is unity in the Bible. But it is only the unity of the literature of the same people. There is not unity of doctrine: there is absolute contradiction in statement.

*The Church known in history as the Roman Catholic. It is acknowledged on all hands that the doxology was not in the *most* ancient version, but it *was* in such ancient versions as the Æthiopic, the Armenian, the Gothic, and the Syriac. It was not an interpolation, therefore, of the historical Protestant Church, which only dates from the sixteenth century. The fact that it is not in the Vulgate proves nothing, as that was only declared the *only* canonical version at the Council of Trent, 1546 A.D. The only church there was, was the Catholic, and it interpolated the doxology in the versions named.

If there is a unity between the Sun-worship of the Old Testament and the worship of the All-Father of Jesus, then there is unity; between offering up a son to appease the wrath of Jahveh and living by faith, then there is unity, but otherwise there is no unity. There is evidence of development, but not unity. There is no more inherent reason for binding the Old and New Testaments in the same volume than there would be for binding in the same book the decisions of the Parliament of Charles I. and a Revolutionary Congress in America.

But men may ask, "What have you left, when you have no more an infallible Word of God?" *What have we left?* Well, in the first place we have left all that is true and beautiful in this old Bible. If there is a song or a poem, or a precept or a proverb or a legend, that we can use to make us lead sweeter, fuller lives, we have *that* left. But, above all, we have left the real, infallible word of truth. That word is written on the rock, imbedded beneath the eternal hills, as read by the geologist; it is written in the natural penalties and suffering of those who transgress the laws of their nature; it is written in all human history and experience; it is written in all true law books and in all real poems, in all hearts that ever felt the thrill of love, in all books of science which teach the law of heredity,—written along nerve cells, and in the blood-red letters of sickness and despair. That word is in the air we breathe, it is the utterance or revelation of eternal verities, written sometimes in ink and sometimes discovered by experience; and it is, in one sentence, that this is a Universe of Natural Law, and that the path of righteousness is the path of peace.

MIRACLES.

IN the very beginning, we must understand exactly what we mean by a miracle. If you were to talk about the incredibility of miracles to many people, they would reply to you that perhaps there might be some higher law, in consistency with which something wonderful had been performed. Now, what they say may be true: only such a phenomenon would not be a miracle, because a miracle is something not in consistency with higher, or any other kind of, laws. No thoughtful man denies that there are unexplained things in the universe. No thoughtful man denies that there may be laws which have not yet been fully discovered. But it is not likely that all this controversy has been going on for ages over nothing. A miracle in the theological sense, however, stands for something over which men do differ, and that too most radically. It is the one word which separates the rationalist and the traditionalist, superstition and science. To assert, therefore, that Hume's essay on miracles is founded on a false definition, is to overlook the fact that there was just such a doctrine in the Church of his day as the one he defined.

The most brief definition, and one as true as any so brief can be, is that given by Hume, that "a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature." To show that this is the orthodox idea, let me quote from the article by

Prof. J. H. Seelye, in Johnson's Cyclopædia: "A miracle is a sensible event wrought by God in attestation of the truth. . . . A miracle is *not simply an extraordinary event* which, however unfrequent, occurs through the regular action of the same forces that produce the ordinary events in nature, . . . but it is an event which nature by its own action *never would have brought forth*, and for which the power of God alone is adequate. It is . . . a new beginning, which rises at once from an almighty fiat. . . . It shows a *new force* introduced into nature, by which nature *is checked and changed*. A miracle may be defined, therefore, as a *counteraction of nature* by the author of nature."

I give you this from one of the most learned orthodox theologians of our day, to show you that I am not wasting my time over something that is indefinite, but that a miracle is the very thing Hume declared it to be, and that it is still considered fundamental to believe in it.

Let me illustrate the difference between a mystery and a miracle. It is a mystery how food taken into the body at last culminates in thought and love and energy. It is not a miracle, however, because it is not contrary to any law, but is in exact consistency with the laws of being. It would be a miracle if any man could think or love after his bodily organism had ceased to act because of a lack of proper nourishment. It is a mystery why man lives at all; but it is not a miracle, because it is in consistency with a well-proved law of the universe that life should culminate in humanity. Death is a mystery, but it is not a miracle, because it is a law that there shall at last be a disintegration of all animal organism. It

would be a miracle for any man not to die, because death is a law of mankind.

There is very much confusion on this question. Men assume, for instance, that the creation of the world is a miracle, and therefore that miracles are, or may be, true. They say that there have been successive creations of animals, and that these at least are miracles. But here is a double error,—an unfounded statement and a false conclusion. Nobody knows that the world was created. We do know that there have been no successive creations of animals or vegetables. There have never been any suspensions of a regular law. What we do know is that the world *is*. Of its ultimate origin, no man knows anything. We know that it has reached its present form by a regular law, and that by natural development, and not by special creations, all animals and vegetables have originated. This is one of the very best illustrations of the popular method of proving miracles by something which is assumed to be miraculous, but is not. The existence of the world and the development of animals are mysteries that we cannot fully understand; but they are not miracles, because no law was suspended and no new power interposed. The power was *in* the universe all the time, that at last caused a world and animals; but it was not put into it.

A rare event is not a miracle. It is a comparatively rare occurrence for a comet to appear in the heavens. So rare was it in the past that man considered the appearance of a comet as miraculous, and as a portent of some great event. But, though a comet is still considered more wonderful than a star, yet we now know that both comet and star are guided by what we call natural law.

Again, ignorance is not a proof of the miraculous, but rather the contrary. Any event is not miraculous merely because the people who observe it at the time may not understand it, and therefore call it so. Many of our modern discoveries are still not understood by many people, and are not even understood in essence by their discoverers. If their law, however, is discovered by any man, they are not miracles, but only wonders. We need not stop here to notice that all miracles, so called, have occurred in ages of ignorance, or among ignorant people in ages of intelligence. The wonderful events, however, are not miracles, if they are ever explained by intelligent men, in consistency with some law. Here is a fact which many people overlook. They suppose, if we deny the miracles of the past, that we charge the writers of the records with intentional falsehood. But this does not necessarily follow. They may have believed there were miracles; but we, with more facts before us, explain the strange accounts in consistency with law, not doubting their sincerity in many cases. Here, then, we have something distinct before us for our consideration. Miracles are a suspension of the laws of nature or are the interposition of some new force which has not before acted, and will not act again according to a regular law.

Now there is one fact that makes it largely unnecessary to enter at very much length into the abstract question of the possibility of miracles, even if we had the time. That fact is that nearly all men to-day deny all miracles, except such as they consider essential to their own special belief. That is, the very nature of miracles makes men deny them in general, because, if they were

too common, they would prove too many things true, the belief of their opponent as well as their own. It is assumed, however, by all believers in Christian supernaturalism that at least the miracles of the New Testament are true for some reason.

Mr. Paley, in his *Evidences of Christianity*, laid it down as a fundamental proposition that a revelation was necessary, and that the only way to prove a revelation true was by miracles. Nearly all the great orthodox writers in England have affirmed that Christianity had to be proved by miracles. Scholarly orthodox theology in this country affirms the same. Dr. Seelye, whom I have already quoted, declares that the Christian religion had to be proved by miracles. The Bible, he says, differs from all other books in that it claims to be a miraculous revelation. This may be fairly said to be the popular theology of the Church.

But there is another phase of belief on this question which is becoming quite popular. Modern scholarship has made so many inroads into the argument from miracles, as the proof of Christianity, that many feel it is not possible, or perhaps safe, to found the system upon such a doubtful basis. Still, they essentially maintain the miraculousness of Christianity. They hold the miracles just the same, only they say now that miracles do not prove the superiority of Jesus, but that the superiority of Jesus proves the miracles. It is largely a question of feeling or experience. Dr. Clarke, in criticising the orthodox writers, says that it is not safe to rest Christianity on the miracles, but he still believes in many of the miracles. He says: "The orthodox doctrine has been and still is that Christianity rests on

miracles. Our view is that miracles rest on Christianity." He claims that Jesus is not proved superior by the miracles; but, because Jesus is so superior, therefore he performed miracles.

Prof. Stearns, in his inaugural address before the Bangor Theological Seminary, took essentially the same position. I quote him as a scholar far in advance of the system he nominally upholds. The only wonder is that he can go so far without going farther. He said: "It is impossible to-day to rest the weight of Christianity on the external evidence of prophecy and miracles, or even on the external fact of the resurrection of Christ. Not that these facts are not as true as they ever were. They are. . . . But, in the order of our logic, Christianity must prove them, not they Christianity. Christianity to-day. . . rests the weight of its argument upon the religious consciousness of the Church concerning Christ, and the personal conviction of the individual believer." Now, in passing here, we cannot help but notice the fallacy on which this theory of miracles rests. The miracles do not prove Jesus, but Jesus proves them! But where did the Church get this consciousness of such a Jesus who is able to suspend the laws of nature or call into requisition a new law? Where do men get this Jesus? They get him only from the traditional belief that he performed miracles. Any kind of a Jesus, except a moral teacher, would never have existed in the modern human consciousness, if the belief in his miracles had not preceded. It is simply reasoning in a circle to say that a Jesus who has been turned into a demigod, because of traditions about his miracles, is able to perform those miracles; for it was the supposed miracles

that made him a demi-god in human thought. Men to-day, because of their own feelings about Jesus, say arbitrarily that this miracle may be false, but that the other one must be true, because one is so much like him and another so different from him, thus virtually settling everything by their tastes rather than by an appeal to facts. Where do they get their historical sense to so infallibly settle questions without evidence? Men make a Jesus out of the sentiments of progressive nineteenth-century manhood, and then make him do in theory what he ought to do *a priori*.

It is not necessary for us to enter upon the abstract question of the possibility of miracles, because the believer in miracles himself presupposes that this is a universe of law. A miracle is something above or contrary to law. Then, the natural process must be that everything works by law. There could be no suspension of law, unless there was a law to suspend. The believer in miracles no less than the believer in science, therefore, presupposes government by law. Men find out law by induction. They take up all known isolated facts, and reason back from them to a universal principle. Now, after a law has been established by an induction, it must take a greater amount of evidence on the other side to prove that it is ever suspended. Science says that the power in the universe, whatever its name or nature, works always by laws which are never suspended. The believer in miracles says, too, that that power works by law, otherwise there would be no law to suspend. It is no manner of consequence to assert that God could suspend a law. The burden of proof lies with those who assert that a law ever is suspended, and that the

divine power works in any other way than according to a regular law. All men, I say, believe in law as a general principle, otherwise it would be no miracle if it were ever suspended. It all comes down then to a question of fact. Have these or other laws ever been suspended as proofs of Christianity or of the superiority of Jesus? Is there historical proof?

Let us observe the moral quality of miracles, even if they could be proved true. It is assumed now, by believers in miracles, that they are attestations of the truthfulness of a system, and the moral superiority of the person performing them. Practically, this belief is shown in the fact that, if any one doubts the miracles of Jesus, he is supposed to necessarily doubt his moral superiority. But miracles have no direct connection, either historically or philosophically, with either goodness or truth. In the days when all men believed in miracles, those miracles were never considered, in themselves, either moral or immoral. The Jews and early Christians never thought of denying the miracles of other religions. They only said that the miracles were the work of demons or false gods. Even in the New Testament itself, we read that some of the Jews charged Jesus with casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub. Miracle-working merely proved *power*; but it did not prove *moral* power, and consequently was no attestation of the truthfulness of a system. It is only a device of modern apologists to claim that all other miracles, outside of Christianity, were considered false. The early Fathers did not consider them false. The miracles of Apollonius were believed in the second century by the Christians themselves, and even by the most learned of

them. Supposing, therefore, that Jesus did transform the world in a good way by his power, it proves nothing whatever on the question of miracles. As miracles were believed to have been performed by others in that day, if Jesus did morally reform society, it must have been by something in which he differed from other miracle workers. The same lack of connection between miracles and morality still exists in many minds.

Philosophically too, if Jesus were morally perfect and superior to all others, it does not follow that he performed miracles. Miracles are suspensions of natural laws. Whatever our ideas about a Deity, or the author of the laws of the universe, all thoughtful men believe that those laws are moral, and that it would be the most moral to submit to them. Even if it were possible then to suspend a natural law, it would be no proof of moral superiority. A law of the universe must be moral: to suspend it, therefore, must be immoral. To attempt therefore to perform a miracle is to throw discredit upon the natural laws by which the universe works. We have some proof from the record that Jesus himself protested against being made a mere wonder-worker, and insisted upon the superiority of moral principles.

But the logical value of supposed miracles as a proof of Christianity is not at all superior. Even if the reputed miracles were true,—that is, if something happened historically, as has been reported,—it would bring no intellectual support to Christianity. Any so-called miracle of the past, with the exception of resurrections from the dead, has been surpassed by natural events and discoveries of modern times. What would have been

the surprise of men in the early ages at a steam engine or a telegraph, at a conversation carried on between Boston and Worcester through a telephone, or that the click of a battery in London should almost instantly affect the price of wheat in Chicago, at photography and mesmerism, at the prediction of the exact time when a comet would appear, or a coming storm? Watt and Stephenson and Edison would have been worshipped as gods, if they had lived in ancient times.

Even the reported resuscitations of the dead afford no intellectual proof to men in our age. Admitting the external fact, men would at once begin to ask for explanation. Were the persons really dead, and were not some natural remedies used to bring back to consciousness those who may have fallen into some swoon? I am purposely brief on this point, and I do not present it as the real explanation for the most of the records of the miracles. Something like this was the first natural explanation of those who began to doubt the miracles, while still accepting the external history. This is not the explanation of the best scholars to-day. But it is worth mentioning to show that reported miracles would be no intellectual proof to a man who cares for proof. The majority of believers, who are really moral, accept Christianity first because they believe in its supposed morality, and then they take the miracles for granted. These miracles, however, do not really make even them believe. There are some people of course who think it an evidence of piety to believe a thing because it is absurd. Like Tertullian, they say, "I believe because it is impossible."

But it is generally assumed that miracles in the time

of Jesus were necessary, in order to establish his religion. It is a common opinion among Protestants that a belief in miracles ceased after the days of the apostles. Many a long argument has been formed to show why miracles were necessary then and not afterwards. It is one of the favorite arguments of such apologists as Paley that Christianity is true, because it alone was attested by miracles. It seems wonderful, however, how people will forget themselves. Men are taught to-day that there are special providences even now, and suspensions of law in answer to prayer, and instantaneous conversions. All these, if true, would be miracles, and yet in the same breath we hear it argued that miracles were only performed up to the end of the apostolic age. But this theory is a device of modern times. The Roman Catholic is exactly logical in declaring that the Church has always had the power to work miracles. I do not say that what he says is true, but only that it is logical from his premise. Nobody in the early Church ever thought the miracles were confined to Jesus and the apostles. It was believed by the Fathers, even down to Eusebius, that Apollonius of Tyana, who was contemporary with Jesus, performed miracles. One of his miracles was very much like one recorded as performed by Jesus. It was said that he met a bier of a betrothed young maiden, and by touching the bier and saying a few words he brought her back to life. He also cast out demons, who acted very much like the other demons who went into the herd of swine. Simon Magus was also a worker of miracles according to the belief of even orthodox Christians. They attributed his power to demons, but never doubted it. Inside of the

Church, they never thought that miracles had ceased. Justin Martyr declared that there were both men and women in his day who were endued with extraordinary powers. Origen said that the sick were healed in his day by using the name of God or Jesus; and even St. Augustine, the ablest of all the Fathers, said that, in his own diocese, in two years more than seventy miracles had been wrought by the relic of the body of St. Stephen. In the writings of all the Fathers occur accounts of miracles far surpassing those of Jesus and the apostles. In the middle ages, the belief in new miracles was even stronger. M. Guizot has estimated the number of saints in the Bollandist collection as about twenty-five thousand, and all these saints won their honors by working miracles. Orthodoxy declares that the number of miracles became fewer the farther away from the apostolic age, whereas the very reverse is true.

The belief has not been confined to Romanism. The destruction of the Spanish Armada in the British Channel has always been considered by apologists as a miracle in behalf of Protestantism. It was believed that a voice spoke from a wall in the days of Queen Mary, proclaiming the mass to be idolatrous. Witchcraft, which was founded on a belief in the miraculous, has been the pet theory of Protestants. Down to the days of Queen Anne, it was supposed that a sovereign by a touch could cure scrofula or king's evil. But of course since the Reformation the belief in miracles has been less; and even Romanists limit the miraculous more than formerly, under the scientific criticism of our watchful age. Up to the Reformation, however, there was

never any lack of the reputed miracles; and nobody in the Church supposed that they had ceased.

This of necessity is only the briefest suggestion of the history of miracles since the advent of Christianity. All testimony, however, would be in the same direction. The conclusion is most manifest. Protestants are in the habit of denying the miracles of Romanism and confining them to the apostles, and then arguing that the apostolic miracles are evidential, but not any later ones. But there is just as much proof for one class as for the other, there are just as many witnesses too for the miracles of the middle ages as for those of the early Church. We only know about the miracles of Jesus and the apostles, because of the testimony of the Fathers, who preserved ancient writings. But those same Fathers have just as positively testified to the reality of other miracles. If they told the truth once, they told it afterwards; if they were mistaken once, they were mistaken about the first miracles, the record of which they have preserved for posterity. If miracles are then a proof of a religion, Paganism is just as true as Christianity, Romanism is just as true as Protestantism.

Paley wants to know if twelve men should assert the fact of a miracle, in a case where it was impossible they should be deceived, and should then go to a gibbet rather than confess that they were mistaken, whether it would not prove the truthfulness of their account. Now, if twelve men should assert something which was in direct conflict with a law established by the testimony of tens of millions of men, we would conclude that the twelve men were mistaken or deceived. Nearly every law has been proved by the experience or observation of millions

of men, especially the law in regard to death. Twelve men would not therefore disprove the law. Besides, under certain circumstances, twelve are no better than one. What would deceive one might deceive twelve, but laws are established by proof beyond the chance of deception. The fact of twelve men dying for a belief would prove nothing whatever, except that they were sincere. Every false religion in the world has had its martyrs, and every false cause. If martyrdom were proof of a doctrine, Hinduism and Buddhism would be better proved than Christianity. If suffering were proof of a religion, then Judaism is truer than Christianity, because the Jews, in rejecting Jesus, have suffered far more than ever the Christians suffered. They have been crucified and banished in every Christian country in Europe. Paley's assumption of the twelve men, who could not be deceived, is purely fictitious too. No twelve men have ever testified that they saw certain miracles performed by Jesus. We have already discovered, in this series of discourses, that not one of the accounts of the miracles of Jesus was written by an eyewitness, and that no one knows positively who wrote the four Gospels, and that the "Acts" was the production of an after age. Paul and Clement of Rome, who did write in the first century, give no testimony concerning miracles of Jesus. It was not till after the first century that our records of the miracles of Jesus were first compiled; and the first reported were only those of the healing of the sick, which can easily be explained on natural principles. Such miracles as those of turning water into wine, and the resurrection of a decomposed body were not proclaimed even at the beginning of the second cen-

ture. There is not a shadow of proof for Prof. Seelye's assertion that the Bible is the only book which claims to be a miraculous revelation. Such a Bible is purely a creation of modern times. The Bible does not even pretend to be infallible. It is a collection of isolated writings, written by different men, in different ages, without any suggestion of a book called "The Bible." But the books which record the miracles were not written in the first century, and are therefore no proof of the miracles. There is good proof that Paul and Clement who did write in the first century believed in a spiritual resurrection, a rising from Hades into a higher existence; but the bald, literal dogma of a Christian resurrection was an aftergrowth. Paley's argument, therefore, does not stand the test of investigation. No twelve men ever did die in attestation of miracles which they saw themselves. The age in which the four Gospels were compiled was a credulous one, and every wonderful report was readily accepted without proof. The early Fathers were men who neglected the laws of evidence, despised "the wisdom of this world" which would have had some logic in it, and often made use of forgeries and spurious writings. The whole of the evidence for miracles comes out of an age when men were superstitious, when they knew nothing of the nature of evidence, when a thing was believed because it was impossible, and when honest men were so influenced by excitement and fanaticism and fear and old superstitions, and the power of overwrought imaginations, that they were incapable of making critical history. We can see how difficult it is, even now, to find out the exact truth of any event; but how

much more difficult it must have been, when there were no students of criticism, when writings were made that were not read till afterwards, or in places where there could be no chance to weigh the evidence, and where the masses were in hopeless ignorance!

But it is often asked how it happened, if the miracles are not true, that Christianity had such an influence over those in the surrounding country, how it happened that such a multitude of those, who could prove the miracles false, were converted to the faith. Well, the answer is that it never did happen. That argument is one of those stupendous fallacies with which theologians have deceived people who have not examined the facts. As a matter of fact, Christianity did not have a great influence over those who had a chance to weigh the evidence of the miracles. Even according to the author of "Acts," after forty days there were only one hundred and twenty believers in Jerusalem. The reputed crowd of converts on the day of Pentecost was composed of every nation from the countries *outside* Judea. Even Paul himself did not believe for several years. The Jews, who had the best chance to decide in the matter, never to any large extent embraced the new faith. Supposing we reverse the question, and ask how it happened, if Jesus performed such miracles, that the Jews as a class never accepted him, and that too when they were waiting for a Messiah. How does it happen that the masses of the Jews never have accepted him to this day? The early Church made the most of its conversions outside of Judea, in the countries where there was no chance whatever to test the credibility of miracles. But, supposing it had happened, what would it prove? The argument

from numbers of converts proves nothing whatever in regard to truth. The followers of Buddha are three times as numerous as those of Christianity. The religion of Mohammed increased far more rapidly than that of Christianity. As the majority of men have always been idolatrous and superstitious and ignorant, the fact that multitudes accept a faith affords no evidence whatever of the truthfulness of certain dogmas in which they believe.

But, not to deal too summarily with the miracles, how can the records of them be explained? In the first place, a large number of them refer to the casting out of demons. But, as we shall discover by examining details in a later discourse, the belief in demons grew from the imagination; and we therefore cannot accept any miracles founded on the theory. The demons were subjective creations, and in some cases the influence of a strong personal presence might help to remove a supposed "possession." Many miracles of healing might be explained on the principle of the use of natural remedies, or the same power of a strong personal influence. But a large majority of the miracles can be explained on the mythical theory. Strauss is the father of modern criticism; and, although other writers have shown his mistakes, on the subject of miracles the most of them have received their inspiration from him, and his theory covers very many cases. Baur suggested the historical method of treating the New Testament records. Beginning with the genuine Epistles of Paul, he detected the historical condition that brought into existence many of the records. For instance, as there had been a controversy between the followers of Peter and Paul, some peace-

maker creates the "Acts," and makes these two men perform about the same number of wonderful works. There is no one theory, however, that can explain all reputed miracles. For the sake of illustration, however, let us see how easily the theory of the myth will explain many cases. Men, for instance, afterwards wanted to show that Jesus was the Messiah of the Old Testament scriptures, and miracles would easily grow up out of some prophecy or story in these writings. They report the resurrection of the dead to life, and so Jesus must be made to appear at least equal. The story of Elisha and Elijah must be equalled by that of Lazarus. Again, out of some symbolic expression, which perhaps Jesus used, time and tradition would make history. Jesus uttered a parable about a tree that ought to be cut down; and some writer afterwards took up the words, and interpreted them as literal history of the miracle of the fig-tree that Jesus cursed until it withered away. Moses had, according to the record, turned water into blood; and so Jesus must at least, in the popular mind, have turned water into wine. Job had represented God as one that treadeth the waves of the sea; and, according to a Grecian legend, the hyperborean Abaris possessed an arrow by means of which he could cross rivers, and so Jesus must walk upon the sea. Jahveh had supported Israel with heavenly manna in the wilderness, and Jesus, who was often in the country with the crowds, must support them by miraculous loaves and fishes.

Understand I do not give these as positive or exhaustive explanations. No one theory will cover all the cases. Some expression of Jesus, which he meant as an illustration, might be taken up and turned literally into a

story by a writer in the second century. Jesus perhaps said that he was the bread from heaven, meaning his truth or character; but some after-writer could easily turn that into a miracle of feeding a multitude. Very many of the so-called miracles however can be explained on the theory of a philosophical myth. That is to say, some utterance of Jesus, or some occurrence, or saying, recorded in the Old Testament, would furnish the foundation for a literal miracle after Jesus was dead. Of course, men may insist upon accepting them literally, and want no explanation. The only trouble is that, when they do, they make Jesus a very inferior person in a moral sense, and defy all logic. It would give us little respect for Jesus to suppose that he was so governed by passion as to literally curse a fig-tree because it had no fruit on it in a season of the year when there were no figs, or to satisfy his whims by destroying some man's herd of swine. The writer of the Fourth Gospel says that his first miracle was that of turning water into wine; but, if it were, it is very strange that the writers of the other three Gospels, who are supposed to be such good witnesses, never heard of that first miracle, or did not think it of enough importance to record it. If Lazarus were really raised from the dead, it is curious too that the writers of the synoptic Gospels do not record it. If they are such good witnesses, it is exceedingly wonderful that they should not know, or forget to record, one of the most wonderful events in the life of Jesus. Very strange is it too that, if Jesus could raise people from the dead, it should always be some obscure person who was never heard of again. Christianity, we hear, is to be especially proved by the power of Jesus to raise the

dead ; but we never hear another word of Lazarus, and we read of no conversions among the Jews because of his resurrection.

Now, as to the resurrection of Jesus, I have only time to try to condense into a few words essential facts. The writers of the four Gospels lived as late as the beginning of the second century, and therefore knew nothing from their own observation about any resurrection of Jesus. The Triple Tradition does not give the story of the resurrection in its complete form. The four writers, or compilers, contradict each other and themselves, on material alleged facts. The suggestions of after-manufacture are most apparent. If Jesus rose in a crucified body with the marks of the nails in it, and ate broiled fish, he did not rise in a spiritual body that could pass through a closed door. The only Bible writer however, of the first century, that affirmed the resurrection, is Paul. But Paul never saw Jesus, except in a subjective sense, in which he realized in his own consciousness that he was alive. Paul's "seeing" was of the same kind as when he thought he was caught up into heaven and saw unutterable things; that is, a vision. Besides, we have learned historically that Paul believed in a spiritual resurrection. He gives no evidence, in his writings, of having even read any historical statement of the bodily resurrection, or having even heard of such records as the four Gospels. It is true that Paul says Jesus was seen of five hundred at once, but this is by no means the testimony of five hundred. He does not tell us who the five hundred were, or when they saw Jesus, or how he "received" the report. It is simply the statement, then, of one man, who had heard in some way that five

hundred men had seen Jesus after his resurrection. If there were any such five hundred, their evidence would not be taken in any court to-day, because they never saw Jesus die, and could not therefore prove that he had not been alive all the time. I think that the evidence is conclusive that Jesus did really die on the cross, but no five hundred witnesses of his after-existence ever saw him die. The whole evidence, therefore, is that of Paul, who believed, perhaps, that five hundred men knew Jesus was alive after his crucifixion, who never saw Jesus when alive, who had little or nothing to do with his disciples, who protested at other times that he did not receive his authority from those disciples, but directly from God, whose belief was in a spiritual resurrection, who rejected Jesus many years after his death, and who did not write till many years after. But does not the marvellous success of Christianity prove the truthfulness of the resurrection? Now, even if the success of Christianity is because of a belief in the resurrection, it does not prove that belief true. It only proves that men believed it true. The success of Mohammed was largely owing to the fact, perhaps, that his followers believed that he was a prophet of God; but that by no means proves their belief true. Facts are to be proved by evidence, not by the beliefs of people about supposed occurrences. The most stupendous systems have been built up upon false beliefs. The numerical success of Christianity is attributable, perhaps, to a belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, together with many other causes which are by no means complimentary or moral.

But just so far as the influence of Jesus has been

moral, just so far as it has made men purer and better, it has been, not because, but in spite of, all those falsehoods and accidents which have tended to obscure his moral truth. His real moral power has been because of the teaching and character by which he has influenced men to obey the laws of the universe, and not because he has ever suspended them. Just so far as the attention of men has been directed to wonders that at least have their counterparts in the feats of legerdemain, just so far has it been taken from all those simple, moral truths and influences that alone prove any man superior.

I must conclude with two moral reflections. The first is that a belief in miracles tends to immorality. Just so far and so long as men believe that natural laws are ever suspended, and that causes can ever have anything more or less than their legitimate effect, just so long will men be tempted to be immoral. Because of a belief in miracles, a Pocasset father murdered his child with the hope that, as in the case of Abraham, God would at last stay his hand. With a professed belief in the special controlling power of a Deity, Guiteau murdered a President. Both of these men have merely carried out the literal teachings of the Church in regard to direct and miraculous interpositions of God, instead of the teachings of science, that this is a universe of natural, regular laws, where duty is to be discovered by investigation and reflection. Because of a belief in miracles, men trust in prayer to save society from cholera and diphtheria and other diseases; but, if they believed in natural law, they would know that poor food, unventilated houses, and filthy streets were real causes, and their natural removal the real cures. Society will not be re-

formed till men give up their belief in special providences, and learn to believe in the immutability of the law of natural cause and effect.

The other reflection is this: that a belief in miracles tends to a destruction of faith in the universe. Just so long as men believe that this is a world of fiat or chance, they can have no faith that has any meaning. But let a man be fully persuaded that this is a universe of cause and effect, of natural law, and he has confidence in the result of his efforts. We can have no faith, if we do not feel that certain conduct will invariably produce certain effects: we can have no faith, if we believed that the prayer of some ignorant man would subvert natural laws and causes.

Mystery there is, but no miracle. Speak of a miracle, and men at once think of the dry bones of some saint or the tricks of some prestidigitator. The real mystery is in the natural laws of the universe. The real mystery was in last night's sunset, when, in the beautiful words of Ruskin, "the sky itself" became "one molten, mantling sea of fire," when "every ripple and wave was turned into unsullied, shadowless crimson and purple and scarlet, and colors for which there are no words in language, the intense blue of the upper sky melting through it all." The mystery is in the song of the sea and the sublimity of mountains, in the clasp of some hands and the depths in some eyes, in the sweet babe that has floated in from some unknown sea of life, in the strange thrill which is caused by pure music, in the effect of eloquence, in the personal charm of friend or lover, in a universe which at last has produced a Shakespeare and Jesus and a Florence Nightingale as well

as a fish or a behemoth, in a cosmos as well as a chaos, in a sweet rose as much as in an earthquake. The real infidelity is to be unfaithful to the universe, and its strange, deep law and power, and to look for miracles in the tricks of man rather than in the operations of nature.

GOD.

Is there a God, a real, eternal power, and can we know anything about him or it, and what is the truth on this whole subject? These questions must be of most profound interest to all men of deep convictions. Every man who has become conscious of the mystery in himself and in the universe, of the infinite sweep of things; every man who has ever gazed thoughtfully and in wonder up into starry heavens or into the eyes of children, or who knows the real deep pain and agony of human life, or has ever stood in hushed and solemn stillness beside a new-made grave, must sometimes have pondered over the problem whether or not there is a Deity, and, if there is, how much can we know of the divine nature and character.

It will be impossible within our prescribed limits to do much more than suggest certain fundamental facts and principles. Neither have I any ambitious expectation of settling this question. The last word upon it will never be uttered, and perhaps there is nothing to be said but what has been already better expressed than it will be again in this age. But it is by faithfulness on the part of each man in his own place, and the perpetual expression of convictions, that truth will be approached.

No harm can come from a candid expression of opinion: the greatest harm must come from the assumption

that any man has absolutely found the final philosophy. Our greatest desire ought to be, too, to find as far as possible a basis that will be broad enough to admit any facts that may yet be discovered, rather than some temporary platform where men with unproved traditions may find support for their assumptions. Accepting certain facts, we must then simply use our reason in interpreting them and coming to a conclusion. No man has any moral right to assume any superiority because of his opinions on this question, unless they are founded on facts.

We all know that there are teachers who can answer all these questions in regard to God in a few moments, without one doubt or reservation. They can state a few formulas with perfect confidence and with as much precision as if it were a mathematical problem, can write at the bottom a plain result, "God," with all his character and attributes and purposes precisely explained. But, for some reason, many of the thoughtful people of our age are not satisfied with this church god, and think that, when they have it, they have only obtained a word with three letters, while the real mystery is as little explained as ever. There is also a suspicion in many minds that this god of which men talk so flippantly is not a being in exact consistency with many well-known facts about infinite power and regular law; and this suspicion is only increased by the methods used to preserve a belief in him or it. A Deity who needs some church authority or concealment of facts in order to maintain his place as the supreme object of worship is not the real power which many of our most intelligent men and women are seeking. For example, there are many who say that, if the Bible is not infallible, they have no proof

of a Deity, and therefore they must believe in that book. But, for thoughtful men, this is but poor comfort, — to build one unproved belief upon another unproved assumption. There are very many reasons why the teachings of the Church in regard to God afford no satisfaction to a man who knows and loves the truth. It may be true that it will be a great loss to men, if they give up all faith in a Supreme Power. But, to many men of intelligence, the teachings of the Church on that subject do not furnish a basis for such a conclusion. Men often declare that the intellectual impulse and science of our age are gradually leading men away from the belief in God. But, if it is the direct effect of the growth of intelligence that men should give up a belief in God, then it is also a direct proof that a belief in a certain kind of a god is not necessary for human happiness and development. The world has grown in happiness in exact proportion to the increase of general intelligence. If the belief in God can only be preserved by teaching men to remain in ignorance, then it will be difficult to make thoughtful men acknowledge that such a belief is of any real consequence. A belief in a god, as gods have been defined in the past, has been a curse to men in innumerable instances. It is so common to hear men declare that any kind of a religion is better than none, that it may seem strange to assert that a belief in a false god has been a hindrance in the way of human happiness, although such is the exact truth. One of the first theories in regard to a god grew out of a belief in the power of the spirits of the dead. When the hero, husband, or chief died, his departed ghost still demanded recognition as a god. His other self was absent, and needed the

same things as when in the body. Wives, therefore, offered themselves up as sacrifices, in order to be companions of the departed ghost or god. If they did not offer themselves on an altar, yet, as the departed would need the same pleasures as before death, they brought all their food and literally starved themselves sometimes, in order to lay provisions on his grave. Even according to the Hebrew legends, Jephthah could offer up his sweet, loving daughter, and Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son in order to satisfy the god. Religion in itself has, in human history, often proved a positive curse to the race. It has destroyed more life and happiness than all wars of conquest and all natural disease. Whole holocausts of victims have been offered up to appease or gratify some god or gods. Edwin Arnold has interpreted for many in our day what Gautama Buddha thought about the gods:—

“ For which of all the gods
 Have power or pity ? Who hath seen them,— who ?
 What have they wrought to help their worshippers ?
 How hath it steaded man to pray, and pay
 Tithes of the corn and oil, to chant the charms,
 To slay the shrieking sacrifice, to rear
 The stately fane, to feed the priests, and call
 On Vishnu, Shiva, Surya, who save
 None,— not the worthiest ?
 Hath any of my brothers ’scaped thereby
 The aches of life, the stings of love and loss,
 The fiery fever and the ague shake, . . .
 The horrible dark death ? . . .
 Hath any of my tender sisters found
 Fruit of the fast or harvest of the hymn,
 Or brought one pang the less at bearing time
 For white curds offered and trim tulsi-leaves ?

Nay: it may be some of the gods are good,
And evil some, but all in action weak ;
Both pitiful and pitiless."

Of course, we cannot but know that it will be said that these were false gods, and that if men had only worshipped the god of the Church, which is called Christian, there would have been a benefit. But that is a virtual acknowledgment that any kind of a religion is not better than no religion, and that a belief in a god does not necessarily result in good. But it is doubtful if so-called Christian worship has resulted much better. Even here, god-worship has stood in the way of commerce, business, and even of morality. Under the popular teaching, men have been taught that it is more important to gaze up into the heavens, to offer gifts at a church altar, and say formal prayers and sing songs, than to study the laws of the universe, find out the path of commerce, and seek the most rational good conduct. The Church of history has opposed science and agriculture and even inventions, and has, at least in theory, declared that it was more important to try to appease some god by formal services than to build ships and houses, or to discover some law of nature. The latest declaration is that a belief in a conventional god is more important than an acceptance of well-proved scientific truth, and that it is better to shut our eyes to some of the light of our age, and oppose the theory of universal law, than to give up the god of fiats and miracles. The most intelligent men of our age are therefore compelled again in very honesty, and in the interests of morality and human happiness, to deny that religious belief is

necessarily valuable. It all must depend upon the kind of a god that is accepted.

The believers in an inherited theology often take it for granted that, when they mention the word "god," they have something definite and tangible. They ask with perfect assurance, "Do you believe in God?" and expect you to give immediately an affirmative or negative answer. They take it for granted that all men must be on one or the other side of the question, without making any qualification, and think the word was handed directly down out of heaven with an exact meaning. Now, in the Anglo-Saxon, "god" means possibly "the good," and stands for something comparatively distinct; but in some languages the word means simply "the brilliant," "the shining," in others it has the same root as "devil," and has probably come to us from the name of Pagan gods. All the way down human history, men have put into the word their own ideas of power or cause, and their own character, whether coarse or refined. Before we can assent to the word, therefore, we must know which god is meant. Many in our churches assume that at least God really showed himself to the Hebrews, and gave them his real name, and on this assumption have builded a whole theology.

But we know that no Hebrew ever had any special revelations of God or of his name. There is no infallibility about the Hebrew records; and, even if the "*I am*" of the Hebrews was not taken from the Egyptian theology, we know that many of the Hebrew names for God simply meant *power*, and were taken from sun worship or animal worship. When men ask us, therefore,

if we believe in God, we can fairly ask, "*Which* god?" God was originally not "the good," but "the brilliancy," the "power," or sometimes "the demon."

Leaving, however, the simple word, and looking at the object of worship, we can see even more plainly that men have no right to assume that a belief in a god is founded either on truth or righteousness. No god has ever come down out of heaven, no god has ever revealed himself in a special way. Men have never had so much opportunity to discover God as they have to-day. There is no positive proof that men have a natural intuition of a Deity. There have been tribes discovered with no kind of worship, no Deity, no consciousness of a great Unknown. Originally, men were only conscious of their external coarse existence. The fact that even five thousand years ago men worshipped one god, comparatively pure, in India or in Egypt, does not prove that farther back their god-idea had not passed through a previous process of development. Renouf, for instance, shows that although the Egyptians, thousands of years ago, worshipped one as supreme, it was in connection with polytheism, suggesting a derivation from a lower form of religion. There is positively no evidence that religion began in a pure form and then degenerated. Men take up their modern conceptions, and put them into the theories of ancient man. Undoubtedly, religions which were once comparatively pure have sometimes degenerated, but that by no means proves that they were not barbaric before they ever became relatively pure. Knowing, as we do, that man has ascended from a barbaric condition, we cannot look to the past for a perfect conception of God. If we find that Jesus and Plato and Socrates had

exalted conceptions of Deity, we must not forget that humanity had been developing for tens of thousands of years, and their ideas were the result of the process. Even our children to-day, with a highly developed organism, do not in their infancy, of themselves, apprehend an Infinite: so much less did the barbaric man have any conceptions of such an Infinite.

Animism, or a belief in another self or spirit in man, was probably the origin of the idea of God. Men thought they were conscious of another self in sleep and dreams, when, as the body remained, a part of the man was supposed to be absent. The shadow of a man in water, or an echo, was suggestive of another self or a double self. When a man suffered with catalepsy or in a swoon, it afforded the same kind of evidence. When the man died, the essential belief was not changed. His other self was only absent for a longer time. He had often been absent in a swoon or spasm, and at last came back, perhaps he would come back even now. So they placed food or drink or arms on his grave, that, when he returned, he would have something with which to support or to defend himself. If he did not return, they still did not lose faith in the existence of his other self. This other self, this absent self, this mystery, became at last their object of worship.

The worship of the spirits of dead ancestors was therefore probably the first form of religion. Men called on these departed spirits for help, and offered to them sacrifices. Gradually, of course, they came to consider the ancestor of a tribe who had been the longest dead as the chief god or spirit. All fetichism and animal worship and nature worship were connected with this idea of

another self, and probably grew out of ancestor worship. The reason men worshipped a peculiar stone or a star or a tree was because they thought it contained the spirit of the dead, or a god. Speaking broadly and without minor distinctions, out of polytheism came henotheism, in which men worshipped one god while not denying the existence of others, then monotheism, the worship of one only.

There is no reason to suppose that the ideas of the Hebrews were developed in any way essentially different. The writer of Isaiah recognizes a similar belief even in his day: "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?" In the case of the ghost of Samuel, when Saul went to the witch, that woman said, "I saw gods ascending out of the earth." The old Testament shows us that the masses of the people worshipped the stars as well as Jahveh, that they worshipped the sun and animals. Even those who, like the traditional Moses, had a better conception, did not deny the existence of other gods. Jahveh was the "king of kings and the lord of lords," he was stronger than the gods of other nations, he "is a man of war." Even Max Müller, who is an intuitionist, repudiates the theory of Renan, that the Semitic race was naturally monotheistic. Let us stop here long enough to consider the significance of such facts as these. It is assumed that, when the word "god" is mentioned, all we have to do is to affirm or deny a belief. But we discover that the word has simply stood for the conceptions of a particular age or people in regard to a cause. God might

mean a dead ancestor, a demon, a god of war, or a king. Even if we confess that the god of the best of the Hebrews was far in advance of the ordinary gods, and at last became comparatively moral, yet not many men in our modern churches would really respect such a being. God had not yet become the ideal of moral excellence, much less had he become the All-Father. He still delighted in the sacrifice of women and children, and the destruction of all outside of the race of Abraham.

But the reply may come here that all this is aside from the question, and that the divinity of the Christian is the supreme object of excellence and of worship. But, even here, we cannot in a moment give a categorical answer. The matter is not settled by the acceptance of a word. I have not taken time to stop to deny these gods of antiquity outside of Jewish history, because few of us in our age would think such a denial necessary.

The popular divinity of Christendom to-day, however, is a being of three personalities, or, in modern pseudo-philosophy, three somethings which are not strictly defined. But there is good evidence that even Jesus did not believe in such a dogma. The word "Trinity" was not used until a long time after his death; and the doctrine grew up as a metaphysical speculation, and only culminated at the Council of Nice. The starting-point of the doctrine was in the writings of Philo, who made the "Logos" of the old Platonists a distinct entity. Undoubtedly, the writings of Philo influenced the writer of the Fourth Gospel; and he tried to show that Jesus was the "Logos," the emanation from the Deity. Men would naturally speak of the divine influence as a Spirit. Gradually, such words as Logos and Spirit would harden

into dogmas, until at last we have a metaphysical Father, Word, and Spirit or Ghost. We could not accept any such God, even if it had been accepted in Christian history. But it is just worth while to notice that there is no such doctrine of the Trinity in the ancient hymnology or art or festivals or writings, up to the beginning of the fourth century.

When men ask, too, if we believe in God, and then call even so good a man as Jesus "God," we are again forced to a denial. It is sufficient here to declare that Jesus never pretended to be God, that he was not thought to be God by the early Christian Church, and that it is an utter absurdity to call God the Infinite, who is the life and light of all this wondrous world, and yet to call a man God, who ate bread and drank wine, and at last died. If we are to believe in a Supreme Being, we must have one who cannot die on a cross. Moreover, there is nothing unique about the Jesus worship. All great teachers, however simple and natural in themselves, have at last been worshipped as gods by those who came after them, when myths and traditions had gathered around their name.

But, aside from all trinities and man divinities, we will of course be asked if we do not accept the god of Christian history, who at least was revealed by Jesus. We are forced to answer that, aside from all metaphysical speculations, the moral character of the god of history is such that we can neither believe in nor worship him. The popular god of the Church is not very much superior to the gods of antiquity. Men have put into their god all the conceptions of power which once belonged to the idea of human government, and, refine it as

they will, that is still the god we are asked to worship. The king was once supposed to have perfect liberty to follow his own will without regard to the happiness of his subjects. It was supposed that he could do no wrong, that might makes right. We are asked to worship a great King, but the history of kings is not so inspiring that we can be won by any such figure. The being which the Church calls "God" is simply a magnified king set upon the throne of the heavens. He can do what would be considered positively immoral, if done by one of us. We are told that we must not presume to judge a god, even when he is declared to be a being who, according to all known justice and righteousness, is immoral and cruel. But we cannot forget that this god is supposed to take delight in the damnation of thousands of the creatures he has called into being.

So much of review has been necessary, in order to show that the word "God" does not stand for an exact idea or reality. We are forced then to begin for ourselves, and see what proof there is of a God. In rejecting old conceptions of God, we may still have sympathy with the emotions which caused men to try to discover a cause. The different theories of a God have been the different attempts of men to formulate a cause for the mystery in their lives. Man has always been more or less conscious of some reality behind all he saw, which was to him a cause, conscious of his relation to some power outside of himself. From the belief in ghosts, through fetichism and polytheism and monotheism, up to the feeling of the man whose "worship is for the most part of the silent sort at the altar of the Unknown and the Unknowable," there has been always the same con-

sciousness of mystery and of a relation to the universe. On the subjective side, therefore, we may recognize the unity of all religions. But a subjective consciousness by no means proves the reality of God.

What, then, can we discover positively? Because we must reject old conceptions of God, must we accept theoretical atheism? Here, we must appeal to the only authority,—science,—meaning by science the best systematized knowledge of the world. When we make this appeal, we discover that the same knowledge which destroys a belief in an anthropomorphic God and universe furnishes a basis for a belief in a cosmic Deity. I mean by a cosmic Deity a power that is behind all manifestations and phenomena everywhere in the great universe, and that is just as much a reality to the man who believes in universal and regular law as the “non-natural man” god of the Church. To the man who believes merely because he believes, it may be of no consequence to know that science is not atheistic; but, to the man who cannot believe without some facts on which to build, it is worth something to know that the best modern science affirms an absolute power in this universe. There are a few men who believe in mechanical materialism; that is, that the sum total of things consists of matter and the motions of matter, but the very best science of the world affirms that all matter is but a manifestation of an absolute existence. The scientific man does not pretend he has proved the ultimate reality, when he has taken up a handful of matter. “Matter” and “force” are merely symbolic names for certain manifestations of a divine reality. There is an absolute existence behind all forms of existence, an in-

finite life behind all forms of life. I need not stop to quote from authorities; but such men as Spencer and Huxley and Tyndall, who are often called atheistic by the thoughtless, have asserted repeatedly that philosophic materialism is absurd, and that to express all life in terms of spirit would be much nearer the truth than to express them in terms of matter. Men sometimes assume that, when they have taken up a handful of dust, they have found an ultimate reality; but matter is but a name for one manifestation of that reality. Men do not know anything of life separate from matter, but mechanical matter does not itself contain the explanation of all life. There are always movements of the brain in connection with thought and emotion, but those movements are not changed into thought and emotion because they pass off into other physical motion. There is a great gulf fixed between matter and the psychical nature, and there is always something not analyzed after physical science has made its critical examination. That something is the ultimate fact and reality.

Because we cannot know in essence the Absolute Power is no proof that we cannot know its existence. We can know its existence through its manifestations. We do know certain phenomena: we do know that they are manifestations of some Power. Therefore, that Power exists. Or, as Mr. Spencer puts it, "To say that we cannot know the Absolute is by implication to affirm that there *is* an Absolute." We cannot know perfectly the smallest shell on the seashore. It is related to all the universe in such a variety of ways as to be utterly beyond our comprehension. We do not know each other perfectly: we cannot know each

other. We look into each other's eyes, we hear each other speak, but there is a great deep of life within that we do not know, and can never know; but we can know that we *are*. There is much philosophy in Tennyson's poem:—

“ Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies ;—
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower— but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.”

Nearly all the best thinkers of the world practically repudiate atheism. Even if a man affirms a belief in nothing but law, and yet rests on that law as working intelligently, he is practically resting on a supreme power, because the power is no less a reality, whether we call it Law or God. The fact is, however, that there is a power in the universe that works by law, which is its method. To take up the phrase which has been so much used, we can be sure that there is a “stream of tendency by which all things fulfil the law of their being.” We must reject a god of miracles because there is no basis for the miracles, but we can know that there is an Absolute Power which works always and everywhere through regular laws.

Leaving all traditional names and scientific terms, we can have a great reality on which to rest without fear. Worlds may dissolve, friends may depart, and yet we may believe that there is something behind, something left, that is too divine to change in essence.

This much, therefore, we have for a sure starting-point. Then, we have a perfect right to go a step farther, and

say there is a Power in the universe which tends toward righteousness, and makes all things fulfil the law of their being. Now, unless we are anxious about names, here is surely God enough. Even if we could go no farther, it would be better to believe in a reality, though we only called it a "Power working for righteousness,"—to use the phrase of Arnold,—than to use conventional names that do not stand for any reality. It is some satisfaction to know that we can believe in such a Power always working toward the best, and yet be in exact sympathy with all the teachings of modern science. We could not build our hopes on a god of fiat and special miracles, because we would have to shut our eyes to the best proved facts. This universe is evidently moving onward by a fixed and regular law that is never suspended. A god who sometimes opposes that law could not be supreme, because we could not but see that the law is the greatest power of the two. How much better then to believe in a Power which is working through laws which are regular and immutable.

Moreover, we can affirm that that Power is working in an intelligent manner, and is good. It is working in an intelligent manner because its manifestations and laws can be interpreted by our intelligence, and can be practically understood. That Power is good because it works in consistency with the universe. We know nothing about any goodness except by the standards of this universe. We have to find out goodness by studying the laws of the universe. Anything is good which is in consistency with those laws, and the Power which is in the laws and of which they are manifestations must be good. If in a world that is not yet at perfec-

tion, we do not find what seems to us good, it is only because that Power has not yet made all things fulfil the law of their being, but is still in the creative process, or it is because we do not understand goodness. We see therefore that, after rejecting the claims of tradition, we have a power which is as real to us as the god of the church of antiquity. If many men do not use the name, it is often because they do not wish to seem to uphold the idolatry and anthropomorphism which have gathered around it. If however, in not using it, men assume that there is no ultimate power which works intelligently and toward righteousness, they are just as unscientific as the believers in tradition. Because a Power there is behind all manifestations which is a reality, and which in contradistinction from anything we see is divine. The name is not so essential, but the fact is essential. As says Goethe:—

“Then call it what thou wilt,—Bliss ! Heart ! Love ! God !
I have no name for it. . . .
Name is but sound and smoke
Shrouding the glow of heaven.”

But of course I cannot be unconscious that many will not be satisfied with such a solution of this matter. Men may tell us that we are only believers in blind force and not in a personal deity. But, in the first place, much of this talk about blind force and law is only a cry used to frighten timid people. Force and law are not the absolute power of the universe, but only manifestations of it. If by personality men mean that the power which works for righteousness contains the potency of all which is sweetest and best in man, we must accept the

word. Nothing exists in an effect which did not exist potentially in the cause. It is doubtful, however, if it is worth while to make so many concessions, as some intelligent teachers do, to the demands for a personal God. To strip the word "personal" of all its ordinary meaning, and then apply it to the Infinite, seems too much like a compromise with prejudice. The Infinite cannot be less than personal, but is it to be limited by a word? In all strict construction of language, God cannot be personal. John Fiske well says: "Personality and Infinity are . . . mutually incompatible. The pseud-idea 'Infinite Person' is neither more nor less unthinkable than the pseud-idea 'Circular Triangle.'" Let us think of it for one moment. There is in this universe a Power which controls every comet and star, millions of miles away, in consistency with some regular law. That same Power is developing the rose in your garden and inspiring your thought. Can you think of anything personal in such a Power? Of course, we can understand the interpretations of men who follow the scientific method, when they use the word. But, when the masses of men will always attach limitations and fickleness to any power which bears the word *personal*, it is doubtful if such a use is not more injurious than beneficial. All words will be misinterpreted by many people of course, but there are words which suggest larger conceptions and, as I believe, more real reverence. We must think in an anthropomorphic way because we are men, but it does not follow that we must turn the Infinite into a person, any more than the blue sky. Subjectively, we are anthropomorphic; but we need not make the object anthropomorphic, when we speak in philosophical language.

Again, we cannot know the Power which works for righteousness in essence, but only know its *morale*, its method of working. The influence and outcome of that Power we may say, in our poor speech, are intelligible and good; but we cannot dogmatically apply any terms to that Power in its essence without at once suggesting limitation. We cannot strictly *know* anything which we cannot classify. We can know men so far as to classify them. All knowledge has such elements as likeness, difference, and relation; but we cannot classify the Infinite, and cannot therefore know it as we know men. But this does not detract anything from the supreme Power. It is very poor faith which assumes that the Infinite cannot be, unless with some such poor intelligence and will as we possess. There may be an existence infinitely superior to our conceptions. The Infinite is present everywhere, and is the ultimate reality in all things. It is but poor honor that we should limit it to our will and intelligence and personality. The Unknowable of Herbert Spencer and of hundreds of others in modern times is not a region where there is no God, but a sphere where there is a Power which no man can know in essence. We can know that there is an Absolute, and we can know its manifestations, and we can know that things work in consistency with our intelligence; but of that Absolute in its essence we cannot know; and, because we cannot know, we can ever wonder and aspire. I am glad to find too that, leaving out those who think everything is settled when they have found the chemical elements of matter, and leaving out believers in a "non-natural man" god, there is an essential unity among men with deep convictions. There is a

difference in the use of words; but often those who theoretically accept no god show the most loyal recognition of a supreme Power.

But we need not be robbed of any emotional religion. Religion has two factors, the intellectual and the emotional. On the intellectual side, we can only appeal to what we can prove: on the emotional side, we may seek for sympathy and aspire after the Infinite, and put our longing into words. Only let it be understood we are using the language of poetry, and not of dogma, when we express our emotional nature. Men, under their emotional impulses, may call the Great Power "Father," although men used that name long before Jesus. As Max Müller says, too, the word Father is suggestive of limitations, as all fathers were themselves begotten. Our modern progressive Hindu calls the Infinite "Mother," to express his longing for sympathy. No pronouns nor nouns can contain the Infinite; and the day may come when the believer in a Cosmic Deity may not be forced to say "he" nor "she" nor "it," all expressive of limitation, but may have a word peculiarly appropriate to an Infinite Power. In the mean time, we will do the best we can to express our belief in a power behind all manifestations, and to utter our heart-longings after perfection. Some of the best believers, therefore, are those who do not dogmatize about the essence of Deity. "Does he believe in God?" asks some man who has a Deity he can sum up like a mathematical problem. Better ask sometimes if he believes in anything else. Spinoza was called "God-intoxicated," and Fénelon wrote: "What do I see in nature? God! God! everywhere God alone." There are times in the lives of

earnest men, as they see the changes in the material universe, that it seems as if there were nothing but the Infinite. Then, they feel like saying with Goethe:—

“Him who dare name
And yet proclaim,
Yes, I believe?
Who that can feel
His heart can steel
To say: I disbelieve?
The All-embracer,
All-sustainer,
Doth he not embrace, sustain
Thee, me, himself?
Lifts not the heaven its dome above?
Doth not the firm-set earth beneath us lie?
And, beaming tenderly with looks of love,
Climb not the everlasting stars on high?
Are we not gazing into each other’s eyes?
Nature’s impenetrable agencies,
Are they not thronging on thy heart and brain,
Viewless or visible to mortal ken,
Around thee weaving their mysterious reign?
Fill thence thy heart, how large soe’er it be.”

But is there no such thing as atheism; and, if there is, what is its essence? Historically, atheism has generally meant a denial of the popular idolatries, and the atheist has been the man who was so much more intelligent than his fellows that he was denounced. In India, a man who grew away from the Devas was an adeva, or a denier; or, in other lands, a man who grew away from a belief in the ghost of a dead ancestor was an atheist. Socrates, Newton, Bruno, Vanini, even Archbishop Tillotson and farther back Jesus, were declared atheists by those who would admit no changes in the verbal inter-

pretation of religion. Whoever doubted the popular conceptions of Divinity, even though it was afterwards shown that he had a conception infinitely larger and grander, has been condemned and generally sacrificed as an atheist. If therefore, in our day, men who do not think very deeply condemn certain thinkers as atheists, it will be well to remember that in history atheism has meant simply an improved belief. Real atheism is the enemy of all hope, of all morality, of all progress. How, then, shall we define it? In seeking an answer, let us remember what we have for certain. This universe is under the control of an eternal Power that is making all things tend toward the law of their being. Atheism is unbelief in that Power, opposition to it, a failure to recognize the unity of things. The atheist is the man who thinks that wrong is just as likely to result in good as right, who thinks the universe is a lottery, who is a believer in "schemes" by which he thinks to get rid of immutable facts and laws. As Lowell says:—

"He who has deepest searched the wide abysm
Of that life-giving soul which men call fate,
Knows that to put more faith in lies and hate
Than truth and love is the true atheism."

The atheist is the man who thinks, because some old doctrine or theory is proved false, that therefore there is no eternal law of righteousness by which he is morally bound to regulate his conduct. He thereby proves that he never did believe in a Power which makes for righteousness, but only believed in words of man. The real atheist may be the man who stands at a church altar, robed in the vestments of historical religion, if he

opposes the real Power in the universe which works by law and not by miracle, and which is discovered by a consideration of facts. The believer is the man who is satisfied that, whatever he thinks or fails to think, there is a Power working for righteousness, and who surrenders himself to that Power in loyal obedience. To be immoral with the feeling that immorality is about the same as goodness, to fail to recognize in conduct the moral sweep of things, is atheism so deep and dark and damning as to be appalling.

In brief, we intellectually perceive a Power in this universe which makes for righteousness; and we emotionally express our feelings in what language we please, so it be understood as poetic and not that of literal dogma. We have a Power which is real, on which we can rest in life, and in the lonely hour of death, with a feeling that all is well. It is working always and everywhere, through nature and universal law. Speaking in the language of poetry therefore, and not of creeds, we can express our emotions by saying: He trails his garments among the sunlit clouds, the stars of the deep blue are the jewels in his coronet, the sweetness of his presence is among the roses and lilies, the murmuring of waters is the music of his voice, and on him can we rest in perfect confidence, in that hour when this outer world is melting away from us like the morning mists in the presence of the sunlight.

SATAN, OR THE DEVIL.

ALTHOUGH to-day there may not be expressed many distinct dogmas about a devil, yet it would be simply impossible to consider the popular theological system, in anything like a complete manner, if we were to ignore the subject. Next to the doctrines about God and Jesus, the doctrine of a devil forms the most important part of that system, whether expressed or not.

We may assert even more strongly that there would have been no necessity for any supernatural Jesus, had it not been for a belief in an enemy of man, like Satan. Up to the time of Anselm, the theory of the atonement of Jesus was absolutely founded on the doctrine of a devil. This world was made the dominion of an Evil One: all men were his especial property. But Jesus was offered up as a redeemer, a special price,—not to God, but to Satan, for which that evil person was to give up his claims on humanity. Every expression about the price paid for sinners, from that of the literalist, who talks of the redeeming blood, down to the more progressive, who calls Jesus his redeemer, grew originally out of the theory that Jesus was the price God gave the devil for humanity. If, in human thought, there had been no devil, there would never have been any idea of Jesus as a sacrificial Saviour, and no scheme of redemption.

But men are mistaken if they suppose the Church has

given up its devil. The Westminster Confession states that the wicked will be punished "with unspeakable torments, both of body and soul, with the devil and his angels forever." The doctrine is implied too in the theology of churches, even if not explicitly stated. With nearly all revivalists, the devil is still as real as any other personage. Even in the most respectable orthodox communions, although doubt on this doctrine might be tolerated, yet the doubter would be treated with suspicion, and considered by the multitude as on the high road to error.

It is no proof either that the belief is gone because the name is not so much used as formerly. That is partly to be accounted for by the fact that the name is used vulgarly by the multitude, and it is therefore considered a little impolite for the more cultivated to speak it. It is largely to be accounted for by the fact, however, that many people do have a great deal of fear and respect for the devil, and think it safer not to use his name too freely. His name is held about as reverently by many persons as the name of Deity.

But some sects do most positively teach that the doctrine of a devil is taught in the Bible, and also that it is an essential part of the scheme of salvation. They are most undoubtedly correct too, because the devil is the key-stone in the whole system of a theology which begins with an atonement and ends with a future place of torment for the wicked. There is no necessity for a sacrificial Jesus, unless there is a devil separate from God who must be bought, or unless God himself is a devil who must be appeased; and no one would long think of a hell without its presiding genius.

But even such an orthodox scholar as Rev. Austin Phelps, of Andover, says that there must be a revival of a belief in a personal devil. "Revive the ancient faith," he says, "in the intimacy of their converse" (of demons) "with the minds of men, to the extent possibly of demoniacal possession. Picture their power to charm men with fascinating revelations. Reproduce with Biblical intensity the great conflict of right and wrong in the universe, as a conflict between God and Satan." This is from a scholar in the nineteenth century, and this is his remedy against a belief in Spiritualism.

But, on the most practical questions of life, this belief shows its power even in our enlightened age. Even men and women, who think themselves above superstition, are still sometimes tacit believers in a great evil power in nature, which they can hardly help but making a person in their consciousness, because its workings are so fickle and lawless. Those who think that by carrying some herb in their pockets they can ward off disease, who visit fortune-tellers, or fear to begin a journey on a certain day of the week, or consider it a good omen to be married on a bright day, or an evil omen to look at a new moon over the wrong shoulder, or to step over a straw, or pass a horseshoe, show an indirect belief in demons, or in a devil who interferes with regular laws. Such conceptions surely do not grow out of a belief in a good God, because a good God would not be so foolish as to suspend laws on such feeble pretexts. They cannot grow out of a belief in law, because that would lead men to believe in natural cause and effect. They must therefore grow out of an inherited feeling that our lives are affected by some fickle evil spirit, who is any time in

danger of coming between cause and effect, and who is connected with certain persons, or material substances, in which he must temporarily reside. Every one of these conceptions can be historically traced back to a belief in a devil, and we are not done with a devil till we are done with the feelings which grow out of the belief.

When Madame de Staël was asked if she believed in ghosts, she said, "No, but I am afraid of them." And so it may be true that very many people who think they do not believe in, are still afraid of, a devil, though they might not quite like to confess it. The subject, therefore, for these and other reasons, is of the greatest theological and practical interest.

How, then, did this doctrine ever come to exist? How did a devil ever get into this world, glorious with the beauty of nature and sacred as the dwelling-place of man? It seems marvellous that human life should ever have been saddened with the idea of a great evil demon, coming sometimes in the form of a slimy serpent, sometimes as a roaring lion, and again as a cold-hearted, selfish Mephistopheles, but always and everywhere the enemy of man, the destroyer of love and virtue, the rival of eternal good and beauty, and the keeper and evil genius of a dark underworld of torment.

When one leaves his theologies and goes out into the natural world, when he looks up into the calm sky on a starlit night, or into the laughing eyes of children, or sees faces radiant with hope and joy, or observes the heroism of men and the devotion of women, when he is rapt to ecstasy under the influence of rich music or pure eloquence or unutterable love, when he is lifted up in awe before mountain peaks and by the seashore, or

feels the strange sweetness which penetrates his nature in the perfume of flowers, it seems impossible that there should be any dark spirit of evil brooding over all, like a black cloud, or even that men should have ever thought of such a person. But men have thought of it; and no character has had such an influence, or has been such a reality in Christian history, as this one which seems impossible to a man in his best mood to-day.

Now, how did the devil come to exist? How did he grow, how did he reach his present form in human thought? We cannot take time to notice the different theories on this subject which have been proved false. I cannot even give anything like a full account in one discourse of all the facts which show the truth on this question, but must be content with stating a few principles, and giving only illustrations enough to prove them.

Sufficient is it to say, on the negative side, that the common idea is that the devil is a fallen angel. The theology of the church is largely founded on the *Paradise Lost* of John Milton. Many persons really think they receive their ideas from the Bible, when in reality they came from that theological poem. Milton was a great poet; but he accepted the theology of his age, and this theological writing is one of the weakest of his poems. By taking a few scattered expressions in the Bible, and then by a vivid use of the imagination, with a combination of floating traditions and other mythologies, he made Satan an ambitious angel who was jealous of God, and through his ambition fell.

The error in the ordinary theory is that it is founded upon the supposition that the Bible is a single book:

whereas, it is a collection of different writings, written at intervals through thousands of years, and contains therefore a variety of ideas on this subject, expressing the conceptions of different ages and lands. For example, the writer of the story of the Garden of Eden knew nothing about the devil of modern Orthodoxy. He mentions a serpent, but there is no evidence that the serpent was the modern devil of the Church. The word devil, or Satan, is never mentioned in the legend. Modern theologians, following the lead of Milton, who himself compiled a variety of myths, have deliberately put later ideas into that legend. The Bible of course would be no infallible authority on the subject; but it is suggestive, as helping to show how our modern devil was made during thousands of years. He was not perfect at first,—not even perfect in evil,—was not considered a fallen angel in the beginning even by Bible-writers, but was manufactured by one of the most curious and interesting of psychological processes.

In the first place, we must remember that demons and the devil are not exactly the same. We must first discover the origin of demons before we directly consider the single devil. In our study of the subject of God, we discover that one of the oldest, if not the oldest forms of belief was that of animism, or a belief in ghosts or spirits as causes. Men received their idea of gods from their own nature. In the course of time, there would be a great multitude of these ghosts, or gods, in the land of shades. After a prominent man, such as the head of a tribe, had been dead a long time, he was honored and worshipped as a god. The primitive man thought that these gods entered into all kinds

of forms, into nature and animals, and even other living men. Now, he knew nothing about cause and effect as we think of it to-day. If there were no rain, it was because some deceased ancestor, some god, was angry and did not send the rain; if a man hit his head accidentally against a rock, it was because the god in the rock was punishing him that he suffered pain. In the most primitive demonology, these gods or spirits were not divided into good and evil, but were indiscriminately called demons. By a gradual process, however, the evil gods were at last called demons.

Some of the gods were considered worse than others, for a variety of reasons. For instance, if a man was not buried properly, his spirit would not be satisfied. The spirit of an enemy or of the member of another tribe was just as real a god, too, as the spirit of a friend. Primitive men never thought of denying the reality of the gods of other tribes. Even the Hebrews never thought of denying that the gods of other nations were real existences. The only difference was that these rival gods were considered evil demons. Even so late as Grecian history and early Christianity, we see this belief manifested. Among the Pagans, the demon was only a spirit a little below Deity. Even Socrates had his demon, who was a good spirit. Now, the Christians did not deny these Pagan gods, but they considered them evil demons. Even Minerva, the personification of wisdom, and Diana, the type of chastity, and Jupiter himself, and all the splendid heroes of the old mythology, were acknowledged as realities, but to the Christian they were demons. The whole world—the air, the water, the animal creation—was under the control of

gods, then, in the earliest times; but the spirit of the ancestor of some other tribe, or the spirit of an enemy, was a demon god. In this way arose the idea of demoniacal possession. If the spirit of the dead might come back into his body, as it had after a swoon, then it might come and take possession of some other man's body. An evil spirit might also come back and take possession of an enemy. Insanity was therefore supposed to mean that some evil god, or demon, had entered into a man. Even if he had a pain in his liver, it meant that some demon had crept into that organ of the body to cause him pain. Even hunger and thirst, as well as disease, were personified as gods. There is undeniable proof that the Hebrews, at the advent of Jesus, held these general ideas, and were superstitious. In the Book of Tobit, we read that the angel Raphael directed the use of the heart and liver of a fish, as a means of fumigation, to drive out a demon. Demons were so numerous they could not be counted. It was thought that each man had ten thousand demons at his right hand and one thousand at his left; and the method of discovering them was to sift fine ashes over his bed at night, and in the morning he would detect their foot-prints. The most absurd ideas prevailed, which cannot be stated now from lack of time. From the New Testament itself, we can easily see that Jews and Christians alike believed in possession by evil spirits as the cause of disease and mania and epilepsy, and even oracular utterance, and indeed all morbid conditions. Possibly, a word from Jesus might have relieved many sufferers, because, many of their supposed troubles being purely *imaginary* possession of demons, all that would be nec-

essary would be to have them imagine that the devils were cast out by a word, and they would be cured. Spitting was formerly considered a religious exercise, because by that action an evil spirit might be expelled.

But the principal fact here is that the idea of demons started with the idea of gods, and that the god of one tribe became the demon of another, and the gods of a past mythology became the fallen gods or demons of the new theology.

This can be also proved by looking at the derivation of words. The Sanskrit name for God—*Deva*—is the same word from which *devil* is derived. Indeed there are gypsies who use the word *devil* as the name of God. Both Conway and Fiske call attention to the philological fact that our word “Bogie,” which is a name for the evil spirit which is supposed to be after children, is the Slavonic word for God. Fiske says, “The ‘*Bogie*,’ or ‘Bugaboo,’ or ‘Bugbear,’ of nursery lore, turns out to be identical not only with the fairy Puck whom Shakspeare has immortalized, but also with the ‘*Bog*’ and the ‘*Baga*’ of the cuneiform inscriptions, both of which are names for the Supreme Being.” So we see that the world has been full of ex-gods, and that the evil spirits, or demons, of one religion, were once the objects of worship in some other faith.

There is another suggestion of the same fact of devil-worship. Dr. Réville gives a prayer of the Madagascans to the author of evil instead of to the author of good. That is, their devil had once been a god, and they had not yet given up a belief in him. Conway’s friend found a woman in England who bowed as reverently at the name of the devil as at the name of Deity.

She thought it was best to be on the safe side, and possibly the devil might at last come out first best. We saw in the beginning that some people speak of the devil about as reverently as of their god. This is a survival of the old belief in devils as gods. Our devils were the gods of the past, and the conservatism of men still leads to a kind of reverence. There is a latent fear in many minds that perhaps the devil may conquer after all; but, when we consider the kind of a god they worship, it would not seem to make much difference if he did. The fact to which importance must be given is that the direct and indirect respect men still have for their devil is a suggestion that devils were derived originally from gods. We have found then the origin of demonolatry. The belief began in polytheism, and among the multitude of greater and lesser gods of the primitive world were the bad gods who were considered demons.

Our next step is to the discovery of a single devil out of the old demonolatry. Strange as it may sound to modern ears, the birth of the idea of the single devil was one of the most progressive steps in the development of theology. Let us not look with indifference upon the attempt of ancient men to solve the problem of evil in the Universe. They, like us, had starlight nights and sweet flowers and beautiful sunsets; but they, like all of us, were conscious of mighty evil forces. There were earthquakes and hurricanes, as well as gentle rains; there were disease and insanity and death, as well as health and joy and hope. Now, they did the best they could with their knowledge. No one should blame them for their attempt to make a philosophy of evil:

the only blame ought to rest upon those to-day who take their mistaken philosophy for truth, in an age when we know better. Their natural way to account for evil was to attribute it to the will of the gods. They knew nothing about natural cause and effect. In the beginning, they did not think either of one source of evil. Every evil was distinct; and every god or demon was a separate cause, fickle and uncertain. It was a step in advance therefore, when men first began to unify these evils and concentrate them into one great evil person. In the beginning, the gods were good and bad alike; but, gradually, they began to attribute all the good to the gods and the evil to one great devil. This was a step toward clearer distinctions between right and wrong. We cannot begin even to suggest the long history of the development of a single devil; but there came at last in human thought one great devil, who was himself the cause of all evil.

The Jewish and Christian idea of a single devil was undoubtedly borrowed from Persia. The leading thought of the Zarathustrian faith was a contest between good and evil. There were two deities, Ormuzd, the good deity, and Ahriman, the evil deity, who were continually in conflict with each other. These ideas had their germs back in Hindu worship, but they were never made so distinct before. Now, anyone who will read the Bible, in the light of modern scholarship, will see how the Jews and Christians got their single devil. There is no single devil in any Hebrew writing before the captivity. Evil had not yet been taken out of the character of the Hebrew God, and attributed to a devil. God was his own devil, if I may so speak. All we have

to do is to read from the Old Testament such phrases as these: "I create evil." "Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" "God tempted Abraham." "Behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit into the mouth of all these prophets." Jahveh, too, is represented as sending disease himself; and an "evil spirit from Jahveh" troubled Saul. That is to say, in the early Hebrew history, evil had not yet been concentrated into a single devil, but was in Jahveh himself. We can now understand Theodore Parker's expression, when he said to a Calvinist, "Your God is my devil." Gradually, however, under the Persian influence, the idea that God ought to be all good, and some single person all evil, caused the creation of a great devil called Satan. Even Satan was not originally a bad spirit. The word Satan means an accuser or adversary. According to the idea of the Hebrews, at a certain period, certain spirits were appointed by Jahveh, around his throne, for a particular purpose. The work of one of these spirits—Satan—was that of an accuser, a kind of attorney-general at the court of heaven. At the beginning of the Book of Job, we see that Satan was simply this accuser. He was not evil then, but simply stated that, from his experience, there were no really good men. God then gave him permission to try Job, and in his efforts to prove his theory he became a tempter. It is not possible to tell how the name of this single spirit or "Son of God" came to be applied to the great devil; but one thing is certain, that there was no single devil in early Hebrew history.

Our devil did not grow from the legend of the serpent. The serpent belongs to another period of devel-

opment. On mummy cases in Egypt has been seen the serpent of the Egyptian Hades, the Zarathustrians had their serpent, and a legend similar to that of the Hebrews has its place in ancient Aryan literature. But the "serpent" which the Hebrew writer borrowed from other mythologies is not the great Satan of a later period.

How the name Satan came at last to be given to the great devil is not clear. After the name began to be used, however, it was very suggestive, as we shall see the devil is merely a personification in the human mind of everything which seems *adverse* to man. Satan, "the adversary," would be therefore an appropriate name.

But we have seen now the growth of the idea of a single author of all evil. It was a development from lower ideas, and was a step onward in the world's progress. Before this belief was reached in Hebrew history, the god of the tribe was like all ancient gods, without any moral character. He merely followed his own whims, and did good or evil from the necessities of his own nature. But, at last, the idea of God became somewhat purer; and a devil was created, in theory, who was the cause of all evil. This devil, too, did evil for the sake of evil, and because it gave him delight. This was some improvement, because it tended to make some distinction between the good and evil in the universe, although men did not always have right ideas as to what good and evil are. We have found then the great evil fiend of Christendom, the devil of our popular theology. After the dawn of Christianity, we have this character held up distinct as the rival of Jesus,—the enemy of human souls. In brief, we have seen then that,

philosophically, demons were created out of the human consciousness and imagination. Men were conscious of evil; and, because it seemed so real, in their ignorance they personified it. Historically, gods likely grew from the belief in and worship of the spirits of dead ancestors; and those gods which for any reason were considered evil became demons. The idea of a devil is the result of a higher attempt to concentrate all the evil of the universe, and separate it from the good. Men's notions were still too anthropomorphic to think of one principle of evil; and so one evil person was made, called a devil.

Let no one suppose, however, that, even if a single Satan were an unmixed blessing, the world was done with its great multitudes of demons. The ideas of men are not transformed in an hour. The old demons came trooping back as thick and fast as ever, and peopled every grove, and filled with terror every home and heart. They were all the agents of one great evil chief now, but were as real as when they all followed their own will. Satan had his emissaries everywhere, from the days of Jesus down to the advent of modern scepticism. Indeed, human ingenuity seemed to increase the number after men had found a different cause. Without a break in the line of continuity, the air was filled with them, and men spent their lives in terror over their exploits. Not content with male demons, men soon manufactured the Succubi, who were female tempters. Even in the midst of mediæval civilization, ecclesiasts and lawyers believed in the Incubi and Succubi, the male and female spiritual seducers. Pope Innocent VIII. issued a bull against diabolic intercourse.

Even Burton, the author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, as late as 1600 A.D. declared that in no age had those demons appeared in such number. Lilith, who was said by the rabbins to be the first wife of Adam, was supposed to be the queen of the Succubi. Because, not content with laying the first sin upon a woman, the learned men even invented a story that Adam had a wife before Eve, who herself became an evil spirit, and then came back to tempt him from his state of innocence. Even Luther was a firm believer in the Incubi and Succubi. Men even thought there were spiritual vampires who entered into men and sucked up their blood. We cannot follow up this particular point, but must leave it by noticing that up to the last of the eighteenth century the air was thought to be full of demons. Every man was supposed to have his special tempter, and all life was made a terror by this belief.

But nothing could be more absurd than the assumption of Christian theologians that their devil is a real personage, of whom the Bible alone gives the correct history. It can be easily shown that every conception of him has come from old superstitions and other mythologies. The devil of the Church has not even the merit of being original, but is made out of all the myths of every age and land. Wherever the Church carried its devil, he at once assumed the shape and form of the superstitions of that country or age. Mr. Tylor shows that the Asmodeus of the Book of Tobit may be traced back to the Persian demon Aeshma Daeva, and then afterwards is made to do duty in the devilry of the middle ages and to end as the Diable Boiteux of Le Sage. The devil-inspired witch of New England

clergymen and of Goethe's *Faust* was a survival of the story of Adam's first wife. The angel, who fell from Heaven in Milton's poem, had performed the same feat before, in the story of the giants who attempted to scale Olympos. The serpent came from India and Egypt through Persia. Our Christian church devil got his horns and hoofs from the goat-like deity, Pan, and perhaps even obtained his irreverent nickname, "Old Nick," from the water-nymphs or nixies of mythology. He has not even the virtue of being original, but is a veritable patchwork, made up of fragments from every defunct system, every hideous nightmare, every species of indigestion, and every childish fancy that has ever floated in on any breeze, from any shore.

And yet he has been as important a factor in Christian theology as even Jesus, and has always been the dark background of that sublime character. The first action of the man Jesus, according to one record, was to go off to be tempted of the devil. This story, by the way, has essentially done service in the literature of Buddhism. Then, the theory soon grew up that this world was the kingdom of Satan, which Jesus was to win from him. It was said that Jesus won it from him on the cross; but for some strange reason, never yet explained, he has never been able yet to take possession. It is true individual believers are said to be delivered from his power; but, as they are liable any time to be drawn away to destruction, that too seems to be meaningless. Fictitious as is the devil, all the traditional theology is involved in his existence. A belief in the necessity of the death of Jesus, in order to purchase men from Satan, grew out of this doctrine. Conversion

was considered necessary, in the beginning, in order that men might be taken out from the influence of this evil one.

Even the beauty of Jesus, as a man, has been obscured all through the ages by this devil doctrine. Out of the belief that there was something mechanical about Jesus, to offset the devil, has grown up superstitions in the Church. If Jesus could conquer the devil, then a cross, or holy water, or even pronouncing his name, would tend to frighten away the tempter. Beads and strings and torches, for the same essential reason, would have the same effect. Not to dwell longer on this special point, when we look at the history of the Church, even down to this century, we cannot help but see that the belief in a devil has been the greatest curse ever inflicted on man. It was this belief that has given priests and conjurers their power, because the deluded multitudes thought they had some magic way to ward off the power of the evil one. Science was kept back hundreds of years because of this dark belief. The man who began to doubt and think for himself was at once considered as given over to the devil; and every question of his mind was supposed to be the suggestion of that evil spirit. Goethe's *Faust* grew out of stories of the sixteenth century concerning a Doctor Faustus who was a magician and knew something about chemistry. The name of this impostor was soon used by the Church as a title for the freethinker; and the original of Mephistopheles was the devil of the same period, who had taken possession of a man who dared to think. Original thought was considered a suggestion of the devil.

No tongue can ever fully describe the long history of horror which has grown out of this barbaric conception. The lives of men and women were made miserable by the belief that they were under the control of a power, who might any time inflict on them the most terrible diseases, and then after death carry them away to everlasting misery. Who could ever be really happy with the thought that the very air was filled with evil spirits, and that even their friends and helpless babes were under the seductive influence of demons? More suffering and agony have been caused by the belief in witchcraft than by all the wars of ambition that have ever cursed the earth. Thousands of men and women, and even little children, have been sent to death in the most heartless manner, because of a belief that they were possessed of the devil; bishops, priests, and even judges, condemned to death in the most cruel way, without trial, every one who was accused of the crime. A denial on the part of the accused was of no significance, because one who was charged with witchcraft was supposed to be under such Satanic influence that he would utter falsehood. Protestantism has just as dark a record as the old church of Romanism. Luther not only believed in the devil, but said he would have no compassion on the witches, but would burn them all. Scotch Presbyterians not only made life hideous by their terrible doctrines of the devil, but their persecution of supposed witches was the most atrocious. Baxter and Wesley were firm believers in witchcraft, and thought that any doubt on the subject was a doubt of Christianity. Never were there so many deaths for witchcraft as under the Puritans during and after the reign of

Cromwell. There was never any inquisition more cruel and unjust than that of Puritan clergymen of New England, when they dragged sweet children and beautiful maidens and white-haired, gentle mothers from their homes, to send them to a hopeless death, under the charge of witchcraft. The Puritans had many noble elements of character; but Puritanism, on its religious side, was largely devil worship, and its real spirit was more dark and intolerant and inhuman than that of any infidel French Revolution. Many Puritans were brave, strong, conscientious men; but, because of their belief in this hideous doctrine, they made life a hell on earth. When every vestige of superstition, which has grown out of the old doctrine, is banished from the minds of men and the teachings of the Church, it will be one of the greatest triumphs in history.

The conclusion of our investigation is so plain that it hardly needs expression. There is no authority whatever for the church doctrine of a devil. The devil was created out of all the dreams and sorrows and false philosophies of all the ages. He was only the result of a feeble attempt to explain the mystery of evil. No man can explain fully this mystery. We only know that this is a universe of law, and that whatever comes in conflict with that law will bring a result of pain. There are certain natural causes for all apparent evil. Wind and storm and disease and death all come by natural and regular processes. The day for the personification of natural forces has about departed. The devil theory was a development from demonolatry. It divided the causes of the universe into two, instead of a multitude. But there should be no division at all; for there is but

one ultimate power in this universe, and what seems to us evil is but the condition under which it works.

With the destruction of the old devil ought to go logically all the theology which grew out of a belief in his existence. All schemes of redemption, all hells as places, all sacrifices, all holy rites and hymns and prayers which give expression to such beliefs, have no more any logical meaning. All our beliefs, however faint, in the magic power of relics and sacred days and omens, ought, too, to go with the decaying doctrine out of which they grew.

Let us thank science and take courage in the thought that the old devils are dying and will soon be dead. Everything is now, in the belief of the most thoughtful men, governed by the law of cause and effect. Disease and lunacy are traced to their cause, the storm and earthquake are following some law, our suffering when we do wrong is the consciousness we have that we have transgressed some principle of righteousness. There are no special miracles, for all life is a mystery.

There is no double conflicting power in this universe, but all things everywhere are governed by one universal righteous law. The fires of hell are put out, "no deity simmers in the boiling pot, no presiding spirits dwell in the volcano, no howling demon shrieks from the mouth of the lunatic." Thanks to scepticism and critical investigation, we are no more choked with the asphyxia of an atmosphere pervaded with demons. Storm and earthquake are just as natural as rain-drop and sunshine, and just as divine. If they destroy us, they are still expressions of a universal good, and are a part of the process that is making the world habitable. Therefore,

the sweet thought that comes to us on starlit nights and with the perfume of flowers and the ecstasy of love and the laughter of children is the truest; and the dogmas formed under morbid conditions are unreal and fictitious. It is only the result of weakness, in ourselves or ancestors, which we turn into devils; and we can trace the cause of every one in our education or physical organism.

SIN AND THE ATONEMENT

It hardly needs to be stated that the average believer considers the doctrine of sin an essential part of belief. The "atonement" is considered the one fundamental necessity, but it is necessary because man is a sinner, and needs an atonement made for him. So important is this dogma that any one who denies that man is a sinner, or the necessity of an atonement, is considered a dangerous sceptic. "Self-righteousness" is continually condemned by the Church; and it is supposed to consist in the belief, or feeling, that a man is not a sinner, and has the power to be righteous enough himself. Here is the point where Liberals are continually judged. No matter how moral a man may be, or even how reverent, he is considered sceptical, if he does not believe that man is a sinner. To persuade men to feel that they are sinners is the prime business of the churches, and logically too, because there would be no place for their atonement, or their "redeemer," unless man has such a nature or is in such a relation toward God that the atonement and saviour are necessary.

The atonement, too, is considered fundamental. With many persons in modern churches, a man may doubt almost everything else; but if he only says in some form that he believes in the atonement, though he may not be able to tell what he means by it, he is considered a

true believer. Be a man never so moral, if he dies in disbelief of that atonement, his future state is considered critical; and though a man has committed even the crime of murder, if he will only say on the gallows that he accepts the blood atonement, it is supposed that he will go at once into the arms of Jesus. With the exception of a few modern religious societies, all the churches of Christendom are built on the doctrines of sin and the atonement. Take away those doctrines, and you take away all their present reason for existence, you hush all their prayers for forgiveness, all their hymns to the slain Lamb of God, you destroy the force of all their logic, you bring to an end all their church business. Because, let this be remembered, that *the business* of the Church is "saving souls," as we may hear everywhere. By soul-saving, too, is not meant the deliverance of men from intellectual error, from political corruption, from social evil habits, but from the consequences of a theological something called "sin." If you were to answer some believer, who asked you if your soul was saved, that so far as you knew you lived a good life, he would tell you that was not what he meant. He would want to know if you had been saved from sin, and had accepted Jesus; and his "sin," too, would not necessarily mean anything real and tangible, but a metaphysical something, that he thinks shuts you away from God, and will keep you out of heaven, unless it is forgiven. Because all this modern talk about the value of the Church as a school of education in morals is founded on modern rationalism, and not on theology. The traditional Church has no logical place for any such work. Any instructions in morals are

purely side issues, engrafted into the Church as modern improvements, but no part of the original system. Let some active young minister go on the supposition a little while that the Church is a school of education in morals, and he will soon discover his mistake. Let him begin to give a course of Sunday evening lectures on the necessity of good drainage and digestible food and the legitimate drama and morals in politics, and he will soon be informed by the defenders of the faith that he is perverting the purpose of his ministry, and that his business is to "save souls" by preaching the comfortable old doctrine of sin and its atonement through the blood of Jesus. He must not talk either about any sins near enough to touch any vital fact in life, but must talk of "sin," the indefinable something which shuts men away from God and heaven. As the *Biglow Papers* has it:—

"I'm willin' a man should go tollable strong
Agin wrong in the abstract, for that kind of wrong
Is ollers unpop'lar an' never gits pitied,
Because it's a crime no one never committed;
But he mus'n't be hard on partickler sins,
Coz then he'll be kickin' the people's own shins."

There is some difficulty in stating in a few words what these doctrines are. The difficulty is not that there are no definitions, but that there are so many different ones that it is not easy to choose. The doctrines of the Roman Catholics and of the Church of England are not essentially different on this question from that of the evangelical churches. We need not here go into the fine definitions on minor points. There is this unity underlying all the definitions: that man is a sinner, that he is in

a state of enmity against God, that he naturally prefers wrong to right, that his nature is such that he cannot do right of himself, that because of his nature he is under the condemnation of God, in some form. It is almost universally held too by all who think man a sinner that he became so because of the fall of Adam; and all imply, if they do not affirm, that sin is an entity—a thing—which shuts man away from God, and will at last keep him out of heaven, unless removed by some power outside of himself.

This fact, too, must be kept prominent, if we would understand this subject: that sin, in the theological sense, does not necessarily mean bad conduct between men, or anything practical or tangible, but that it is something with reference to God, something which separates a man from him. It does not mean immorality, because the moral man, according to the Church, may be the greatest of sinners.

With this idea, of course a doctrine of an atonement would follow as a logical necessity. If man is in such a condition that he cannot do right, and if, because of that, he is under the wrath of God, or even at enmity with God, something must be done for him.

Historically, the first theory in the Church, after dogmas were formulated, was that when man sinned he became the property of Satan, and that Jesus gave himself as a price to that arch-demon for the purchase of humanity. It is founded on such words in the New Testament as *redeem* and *ransom*. Jesus was the “redeemer,” or price paid for man.

The second theory is the *legal*. The law of God is inexorable, and had to be kept by some one. The sin of

man being against an infinite person, however, the guilt is infinite; and, as man is only finite, he could not pay his own infinite debt. It is just worth while here to call attention to the cold-blooded nature of this theory. It has not any reference to the purification of man's nature, but is purely a technical matter, an account to be settled in a forensic way. Such words as *forensic* and *debt* are those most often used even to-day in theological seminaries where it is taught. The *legal* theory dates essentially from Anselm, who lived in the eleventh century, and tried to show that man owed a debt to divine justice; and as he, being finite, could not pay a debt to one who was infinite, God himself, in the person of Jesus, died and paid the debt. This has been the popular theory ever since it was conceived. Calvin held it essentially, and taught that Jesus, during the three days he was dead, was in hell, and suffered during that time the exact amount that sinners would have suffered, if they had endured endless punishment. This is the literal doctrine of substitution, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," to satisfy God this time, and not Satan. Out of this grew the doctrine of the limited atonement, which is that Jesus died only for the elect, paid only their debts, and that no others could be called or saved. The holders of this theory find abundant illustrations in the literal language of the Bible. In a Presbyterian newspaper, within a month, it is stated that as the Hebrew laid his sins on the head of a goat, who escaped and carried them away into the wilderness, so the modern believer "contemplates Jesus as bearing his sins in his own body on the tree"; and "he feels that these sins are entities," literally carried away.

Another theory is that of New England Congregationalism, and is generally called the *governmental*. It was first essentially propounded by Grotius in 1645 A.D. It is in substance that Jesus did not die as a substitute, but only to uphold the dignity of the divine government. Man had sinned; and, if God forgave him without somebody suffering, it would lower the government of the universe. There is a wrath principle in the universe that must be satisfied. If some one did not bear that wrath, there could be no government; therefore Jesus died to show that all rebellion must bring suffering. Although this is the theory taught in the seminaries of New England, and so much vaunted by Joseph Cook, it is perhaps the most superficial of any ever devised. If it were not so immoral, it might be called the humorous theory of the atonement. Men were guilty; and so, in order to uphold the dignity of government, God let them go free, and punished a man who was innocent. A government of that kind would have a peculiar kind of dignity. What would we think of an American President, who, in order to show the dignity of the American government after the war, would have permitted all who had rebelled to go free, and then would have satisfied the wrath principle by hanging up the gentle Emerson or the poetical Longfellow? Will men be damned for not believing in a god who would not make a decent President?

These are not all the theories of the atonement, but only some of the most prominent. Horace Bushnell, for instance, upheld what has been called the "moral influence" theory, which was in substance that God suffered *in* Jesus, in order to win men back to him.

His theory has been held in a great variety of shapes since his day, and has been a stepping-stone over which many men have started away from the harsh old system. It was essentially formulated by Abelard. But none of these moral influence theories have ever been popular with the Church. The nearer any man could come to literal blood and literal substitution, the more he has been in favor with the popular Church. Bushnell was always considered a heretic by the truly orthodox; and even recently the great Methodist preacher of Chicago, Dr. Thomas, has been suspended, principally because he does not believe in the "slaughter house" theory of the atonement. No time need be spent in showing that the orthodox churches still have these old doctrines in their creeds. Many still believe in them, although it is difficult to get them to define their position. They declare that man is a sinner, and that the blood of Jesus saves, although it is not easy oftentimes to get a definition that has any meaning. The theories I have defined are held, however, in some form, by all who are not rationalists in the churches of Christendom.

To show that I am not wasting time over fossilized opinions, it must be stated that even some so-called Liberals still hold the essence of these doctrines. Even many believers in universal salvation substantially hold the old theories of sin and an atonement. Many talk about salvation through the mediatorial work of Christ, and the necessity for forgiveness, as if some *at-one-ment* had to be made.

What, then, is the truth on these doctrines in the light of well-established facts? It is that the whole theory of sin and atonement and forgiveness, in every form,

is contrary to historical facts, unphilosophical, unscientific, and immoral in its tendencies. Of course, when I say this, I am not so unwise as to deny that this theory grew out of some fact in human life. But, although there is a root for these doctrines in human experience, yet they were formed originally under mistaken conceptions of God and the universe.

I. They are not in consistency with historical facts. We need not enter every time into the details of history, but may accept its results. The result of the best historical investigation is that the church doctrines of sin and the atonement are founded on a legend. The story of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden is not history. The Hebrews obtained it in Persia as late as the captivity, and it existed in different forms in other mythologies. It is true that the apologist of Orthodoxy has often used this as an argument for the truthfulness of the story. He has said that the story must be true, because it is found in other writings. But this argument is a two-edged sword that cuts into the infallibility of the system. As the legend is much older than the supposed Hebrew revelation, and as it is connected with other religions, it was not inspired by God, and cannot be true, unless those other religions are true. If they are true, then the doctrine of a special revelation to the Hebrews is false. Instead of the existence of these stories in other Eastern writings being proof of their historical accuracy, it only shows that the Hebrews did not obtain them by revelation, but that they were Oriental myths.

But, if the story is a myth, then it is simply absurd to uphold the scheme of salvation which grew out of it.

Even more strongly, historical facts show that these ideas grew out of a barbaric conception of the universe. The doctrine of sin and its atonement had the same origin with the devil. We must not put our modern conceptions of culture into an old doctrine. Sin did not start with the feeling that man had done some moral wrong. Barbaric man suffered some pain or loss, he had been frightened by the storm, his cattle had been stricken with some disease, a limb had fallen from a tree and injured him, or any one of the thousand casualties of life had occurred to cause him suffering. He at once decided that the gods were angry. He must have displeased them in some way; that is, he must have sinned. He did not think of cause and effect in the storm or disease, he did not even think of some real wrong he had done himself or to a neighbor; but, through his fears and superstitions, he devised a fiction called "sin," which was between him and his god or gods. Just here arose the doctrine of an atonement. It began in the idea of giving presents. When a man wanted to win the good will of a living ancestor or chief, he brought him a gift. But, if a gift would please a living ruler, it might also please the ghost of a dead one, or of an ancestor, or the god. Perhaps the god was angry because his body had not been buried properly, or perhaps it was the god of another tribe who was sending the calamity. So men brought food at first to graves, and at last to temples or sacred buildings near graves. Not only was food brought, but even wine and costly gifts, all to placate the god or atone for the sin. Oxen and sheep and birds were brought as gifts of atonement. The theory that blood was sacred to the deities had a very simple growth.

Oriental man believed that the blood was the life. He also thought that by drinking the blood of animals, or men, he imbibed their life, and became one with them in strength and purpose. Offerings of blood made to the gods, by the devotee, implied submission on one side and favor on the side of the gods. Now there is not any good reason for making the Hebrew or Christian custom an exception. When the Hebrew brought wine and meat and flour to Jahveh, when Abraham prepared cakes and veal for his divine guest, it was for essentially the same reason that the Zulu kills a bullock to offer to the "spirit of the king's immediate ancestors," or that the Fijians offer blood to their ghosts and gods. Under the influence of some of the prophets, Jahveh became a better god and more moral; but any one who knows anything about the Old Testament knows that there are traces of every crude and coarse religion in the long, sad Hebrew history.

Even when Jesus came, the conception of sin was not that it was immoral, but merely something which would displease Jahveh. It was moral surely to help a sick man on the Sabbath; but it was a "sin," nevertheless, because it would offend Jahveh who, it was supposed, had laid down an arbitrary law on the subject.

But how did these old conceptions get into Christianity? Not, I believe, through Jesus himself. There is no evidence that he ever thought that he was to die for sinners in any modern sense. He wanted to help man in his own way, by his teachings. Toward the last of his life, he became possessed with the idea that he was Messiah. But, when he went to Jerusalem, he had no intention of dying, if he could help it, although he was will-

ing to die, if necessary. But both he and his friends thought that he would set up a Messianic kingdom. He did not come again, however, after death; and so writers afterwards invented expressions, and put them in his mouth, concerning a death as a sacrifice. They saw that his Messianic idea had not been fulfilled, and so they must make new theories and assume that Jesus taught them. The essential ideas of men do not change in an hour, even at the birth of a Jesus. So they take up old barbaric conceptions of sacrifice to appease a god, and conceal them under the name of Jesus, and call it the Christian scheme of salvation for sin. God wants sacrifices as much as ever, only, instead of offering hundreds of lambs, now Jesus is called "*the* Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." The Christian doctrines of sin and atonement are not even original. When the Church of England still uses the words "accept our offerings and oblations," when an Evangelical minister asks God to bless so much of the bread and wine as shall be used at a communion; when, at the coronation of Queen Victoria, the archbishop offered on an altar a purse and an ingot of gold, and bread and wine, with a prayer "to receive these oblations,"—it is difficult to see where they differ from the essential ideas of the barbarians, who lay food and tobacco in the place where they suppose their god will come. Even the idea that the victim of sacrifice is a god is not new. The ancient worshippers came at last to think that the victim which could appease a deity was a kind of deity itself. "Thus," Lubbock shows, "in ancient Egypt, Apis, the victim, was also regarded as the God, and Iphigenia was supposed by some to be the same as Artemis." So, in

Christianity, the supposed victim, Jesus, and the cross on which he suffered, became, one of them God himself, and the other sacred and efficacious.

But, here again, apologists have used arguments which are two-edged. They have said that men everywhere have had this conception of sin and some form of sacrifice: therefore, it helps to prove their theory true. But, on the contrary, it proves that their scheme is not original, that in its essence it is coarse and barbaric, that it is the same with all the sacrificial systems of the world, and that it was not revealed, but grew out of devil-worship. Unless, then, the savage was correct in supposing that there was a cruel god who could be appeased by presents and mutilations, the Christian cannot be correct in supposing that there is some kind of a sin which must be removed by a bloody sacrifice of a Jesus on a tree.

II. But the theory is as unphilosophical as it is untrue to historical facts. Little time need be spent here, as the argument from history virtually settles the whole question to all but those who refuse to accept history. It is not possible that a finite creature could commit an infinite sin. It is not just that somebody should be punished for the moral inability of men. If man is a sinner in the church sense, it is not his fault. If there is a personal, conscious god, he knew Adam would sin and that his posterity would inherit his nature; and such a god would be to blame, and not men, if man is a sinner. No man ever asked to be born a sinner; and, if he is totally depraved or partially depraved or morally unable to do right, then the power which brought him here is to blame. The day will come when it will seem like an impossibility that any sane man ever held such a philoso-

phy. Any human government carried on under the principles by which the government of God is supposed to be managed, by those who accept the fictions of sin and its atonement, would be considered too cruel and unjust to command the respect of even barbarians. Men under the influence of tradition lay aside all principles of natural justice and righteousness, when they come to the divine government, as if there could be more than one kind of justice in the universe. It is unphilosophical to think of sin as an entity,—a thing. It is the way of children and of men in a childish state to treat feelings or consequences as entities. When something goes wrong, we have a consciousness of the fact that impresses us. When a refined man or woman becomes conscious of having broken some law, there is a sense of pain which seems like a thing; but it is not an entity or demon, but merely a consciousness that we, or others, have done something which will cause somebody pain. When we do wrong, we have a sense of sin, simply because there is a sense or anticipation of pain. It is perfectly natural that a savage should think that his feeling is an entity that had come between him and his God, for he knew nothing about consciousness or the cause of the generation of certain feelings. It is absurd, however, for us, with the light of experience, to take up his childish explanation.

III. We must, from necessity, abbreviate here, and come at once to science. Modern science teaches us that historic man is descended from barbaric man, just a little above the brute. Man did not fall, but he has been gradually rising in the scale of being. But he still has in his nature many beastly propensities and tenden-

cies. Man in the past has passed through wars and disease, has been the victim of passion and appetite; and we, his children, have inherited many of his evil tendencies. There is no such thing as abstract sin in the world; but, through weakness in some parts of his organism, man is not able yet to come into harmony with the laws of the universe. It is not that man is at enmity with God that there is a feeling of wrongness, but it is because men are not in harmony with each other, are not adapted to all their environments, and do not yet understand what is best for them. It is not sin, but the consciousness of mal-adjustment.

Tradition says the death of a Jesus and the right kind of a belief in it will make everything all right with God. Science says it knows nothing about difficulty between man and God, but that ten thousand deaths of ten thousand Saviours will not affect immediately the real difficulties. These tendencies are carried in the living cells in nerve and brain, and only such natural causes as will change these tendencies will affect anything real. If any Saviour will lead men by good teachings to so develop their nature as to modify their organism, it will at last help posterity, but it is all purely a natural process.

IV. My last point is that these doctrines are immoral in their tendencies. Now let us here keep distinct things which differ. Multitudes of men in this nineteenth century who hold this theory of sin and its atonement are moral men. They even think that a belief in these doctrines is an aid to morality. But morality has no logical place in their system. The nineteenth century, under the influence of the teachings of

experience, demands a certain amount of morality; but that morality is in spite of, and not because of, the theories of the Church in regard to sin. Sin did not mean immorality in the past: it meant something that displeased God. That something might be the most moral; but, if it displeased God, it was the one thing to be removed. The Westminster Catechism says, "Sin is any transgression of the law of God." But *which* law of God, and which god? Men said it displeased God, and was a sin for a man to gather sticks on the Sabbath, or have mercy on an enemy, or for a woman to say to her husband that there might be some truths in other religions. So, in their desire to get rid of their "sin," they stoned the stick-gatherer, punished the charitable woman, and hewed Agag in pieces. To get rid of this fiction which displeased God, the Puritan immorally punished the man who wished to play with his child on Sundays, or who took a walk in any direction except toward a church. The "law" the Church has talked about has meant arbitrary decrees of a god, and not inherent natural laws; and the "sin" has meant a metaphysical fiction instead of immorality. If the "sin" which is to be removed meant the evil of having sewers which cause fever in children, meant over-eating and over-drinking, meant such thought and conduct as tend to make men unhappy, it would be worth while to remove it. But, on the contrary, the more men give heed to this "sin" and its atonement, the less they consider real evils. Men sing unctuously these words:—

"Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfil thy law's demands;

.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."

Now, just so far as men act on such a sentiment as that, it tends to immorality. Many men who sing it do not act on it, and are therefore moral men. But, if they lived up to it, it would at once stop business. Men are fortunately better than their creeds. They ought to bring something in their hands, and not simply to "*cling*." They ought to bring one hundred cents on the dollar, they ought to bring good healthful bodies as far as possible, they ought to bring their minds to the consideration of the problems of society and life. "Clinging" to a cross, or anything else, would never destroy political corruption, nor cleanse filthy streets, nor educate children, nor aid digestion, nor even pay the debts on churches. The more men believe in clinging, the less will the real evils of life be removed; and, the more they trust in an atonement, the less effort will they put forth to conquer their own appetites and passion.

There is nothing more enervating than all this talk about theological "sin" and forgiveness. There is no forgiveness except to right our wrongs so far as possible, and make restitution. We need not waste one breath over our sinful nature. We might just as well ask forgiveness because our parents had the consumption as to ask forgiveness for a theological something we have inherited. Joseph Cook went into stentorian rhapsodies over Lady Macbeth's "red right hand." What could wash that hand clean? he cried; assuming that Jesus could do it. Well, nothing could wash it clean; for all the atonements in the world would not remedy the real evils, which were that the king was murdered, and that Lady Macbeth's sense of innocence was gone.

The sum and substance of this point is simply this, that the theory of sin and its atonement tends to immorality, because the theological "sin" does not mean immorality, but a metaphysical entity; and just so far as men believe that any atonement will fix up, or remove, the natural consequences of their wrong-doing, so far does it tend to make them careless about their conduct.

The sooner, too, that men are rid of this whole false conception of the universe, the sooner they will be happy; and the sooner they are happy, the sooner they will be moral. This idea that there is something between man and God is one of the greatest obstacles in the way of happiness. It stops the spontaneity of children, it casts a cloud over the life of grown men. The worst thing that can happen to children is to have them begin brooding over their sins. All morbid conceptions really tend to immorality. How can a man be happy, how can a child develop naturally, who feels that something stands between him and a god at the centre of all? This fiction of sin, next to the doctrines of devils and hell, has been the darkest cloud that has ever hung over human life. Tear it all away, and what have we left? We have *this* left. I am a free being in a universe of law, limited only by my nature and that law. No god frowns on me, no devil tempts me, no sin shuts me away from hope. When I do wrong, I suffer or cause suffering in others. All the wrong consists in the consequences which can be scientifically proved. What is called sinful thought simply means such thought as would degrade one's manhood, or injure one's self or others if carried into action. There is no theological sin against the uni-

verse, because no man can do the universe any serious harm. A man can harm himself, however, and his neighbor; and this practical harmfulness is the reality which we should seek to remedy. But, leaving out all anthropomorphic conceptions, men may ask: Is there nothing in a man who accepts science to correspond to the old sense of sin? There is just this fact, which is as much deeper and more philosophic than the metaphysical "sin" of the Church as the Inscrutable Power behind all, in which the scientific man believes, is grander than the overgrown man-god of the Church. We are parts of the great universe, and are most profoundly related to its mysterious Power. We have, by development, at last reached a condition in which we not only can see the benefit in every-day morality, but also feel our obligation to live up to the deepest laws of our being and of the universe. We are creatures of aspiration, and we cannot tell what we may be in the future. We dare not degrade ourselves, we must keep in sympathy with the highest law, we dare not destroy our ideals. Aside then from the effect of our conduct on our neighbors, we feel morally bound to submit to the highest law wherever we find it revealed. We are not isolated: we are children of the universe. When we have a consciousness of something wrong, therefore, it is our consciousness that we are not living out all our nature, that we are not in harmony with the universe, it is our hunger after the fullest and completest life. Aside from practical morality, our sense of wrongness is the longing for a perfect life, which is born in us, and which forces us to continually strive after an ideal manhood.

HELL AND SALVATION.

ACCORDING to the *Divine Comedy*, when Dante and his companion stood before the entrance of hell, they read these words written over the summit of the gate:—

“All hope abandon, ye who enter in.”

In Dante's *Inferno*, he represents hell as concave and divided into nine concentric circles. Those who were in the outer circles received the lightest punishment, and those in the circle nearest the centre were the greatest sufferers. Dante represents himself as being conducted by Virgil into this terrible abode. In the outer circle was no positive punishment; but here were unbaptized children, here were Homer and Horace, Ovid and Lucan, and here belonged Virgil himself, who said of these:—

“And if they merit had,
'Tis not enough, because they had not baptism
Which is the portal of the Faith thou holdest;
And if they were before Christianity,
In the right manner they adored not God.

.
For such defects, and not for other guilt,
Lost are we, and are only so far punished
That without hope we live on in desire.”

In the innermost circle was Satan, with Judas and Brutus and Cassius in his mouth, all suffering the most

excruciating pain. Out of a wealth of wonderful descriptions, I can only take time to quote one as a specimen, a description from that of the eighth circle:—

“And I beheld therein a terrible throng
Of serpents, and of such a monstrous kind
That the remembrance s’ill congeals my blood.
Among this cruel and most dismal throng
People were running naked and affrighted.
Without the hope of hole or heliotrope.
They had their hands with serpents bound behind them;
These riveted upon their reins the tail
And head, and were in front of them entwined.
And lo! at one who was upon our side
There darted forth a serpent, which transfixed him
There where the neck is knotted to the shoulders . . .
He took fire and burned; and ashes wholly
Behoved it that in falling he became.
And when he in the ground was thus destroyed,
The ashes drew together, and of themselves
Into himself they instantly returned. . . .
He arises and around him looks,
Wholly bewildered by the mighty anguish
Which he has suffered, and in looking sighs. . . .
Justice of God! oh, how severe it is,
That blows like these in vengeance poureth down!” *

I open the subject to-day with this reference, because it at once gives us a basis in sentiment and theory for its discussion. Dante’s poem is not only immortal as poetry, but it contains the substance of human beliefs on this dark theme, as they have been held in the past. Dante not only uttered the belief of the Church in the dark ages, but in his immortal poem may be found every phase of the belief in hell before his day and since.

* Canto XXIV., Longfellow’s Translation.

After the age of the apostles, there grew up a fixed dogma that a large proportion of men would be eternally lost for their sins, and that, too, by the direct punishment of God. This damnation, among other things, was to consist in acute pain of body in everlasting fire.

This dark doctrine of hell hung like an incubus over the Church down to our own century. The principal work of poet and painter and saint and preacher was to picture in the most vivid colors the eternal torments of the damned. There were a few who tried to spiritualize these doctrines, but they never had much influence in their age. Not only were some men to suffer eternal torments, but the majority of the race were to be lost. The old preachers loved to talk about the "remnant" that was to be saved; and it is only within a few years that orthodox preachers have begun to try to show that there would be more saved than lost. Dante's *Limbo* exactly symbolized the belief. The most virtuous heathen and all unbaptized infants were to be lost. It is no slander to say that the opinion has been expressed that there are infants in hell not more than a span long. Augustine held the doctrine of the damnation of unbaptized infants, and so did even Pelagius, who was comparatively rational. Protestantism has not been any the less severe in its theory. The Lutherans held to the absolute necessity of baptism in order to be saved; and, although Calvin taught that the children of elect believers might be saved, he left all others in their natural state of condemnation. Jonathan Edwards, who is still called by the orthodox the great New England theologian, taught in the most barbaric manner the same harsh doctrine. Within a year, I have read in a church

paper a reply to a question in which the editor states that he sees no proof for the modern belief that non-elect infants can be saved. The cruelty of the doctrine has led men to try to modify it, but it is hardly worth while to make an exception of infants. It is just as cruel to damn a man for simply having a sinful nature, for which he is not responsible, or for doing actual wrong which that nature prompts him to do, as it would be to punish an infant. The Calvinistic editor is right, from his stand-point, in saying there is no logical theological basis for infant salvation. But the general doctrine of eternal punishment has always been considered essential by the Church. It was the favorite theme of Scotch Presbyterian, and English and American Puritan. The Westminster Confession declares that the souls of the wicked after death are to be immediately cast into hell, where they are to remain in torments reserved to the day of judgment. They are to be damned first and judged afterwards. The Evangelical Alliance, which embraces all the Protestant churches of Christendom, except the Universalist and the Unitarian, has for one of its fundamental doctrines the eternal punishment of the wicked. The most Evangelical Protestant doctrine has always been the most severe. The dogma of Purgatory is of course absurd in its literal form, but it yet grew philosophically out of a desire to mitigate the harsher theory. It leaves a little more hope for the man who dies with some sins unforgiven. The refined New England saint, Jonathan Edwards, wrote in words worthy of some cannibal: "The damned shall be tormented in the presence of the glorified saints. Hereby the saints will be made more sensible of their salvation. The view of

the misery of the damned will double the ardor of the love and gratitude of the saints in heaven." Mr. Spurgeon, the great popular non-conformist preacher of London, who is so much eulogized, talks thus to sinners even in our age: "Thou wilt look up there on the throne of God, and it shall be written, 'Forever.' When the damned jingle the burning irons of their torment, they shall say, 'Forever.' When they howl, echo cries, 'Forever.'" I could quote similar passages from American preachers of our own age, if time would permit. We all know the beliefs of Mr. Moody and Mr. Talmage and hosts of others of the same type. Perhaps the most progressive opinion expressed by any who still adhere to the old Church is that of Canon Farrar, in his book of sermons entitled *Eternal Hope*, which created such an excitement a few years ago. He denies everlasting or bodily punishment, but still thinks there may be some punishment after death. There have been very many among modern preachers who have shown some doubt of the old doctrine; but they have nearly always been suspected of, if not tried for, heresy, and their general soundness in the faith has been impugned.

It is only truth to say that multitudes to-day, who still accept the general scheme of salvation, have very much modified their ideas as to the nature of future punishment. Very many have undoubtedly given up the idea of literal bodily punishment. Their culture, their sympathy, will not permit them to believe really in the eternal punishment of their moral friends, merely because of a lack of a belief. Out of the love and agonies of the human heart a better faith is being born. Noble men and women cannot bear to think of everlasting misery.

But we must sadly confess that a majority of men in England and America still believe the substance of the old doctrine that, because of sin, God will personally inflict punishment on man in some form after death. It is still, however disguised, a personal infliction of a personal God. The most progressive will put their hopes about in this form, that God must be too good to be so very hard on man after death, that God will not damn a man for a little sin. It is all the same essential idea of Dante's poem, the personal infliction of a personal God, although some men take off the extreme severity of the vengeance by limiting the time and calling it divine discipline.

Undoubtedly, multitudes who still accept the system do not heartily believe in the old doctrine. A theological student, within a year or two, condemned preachers for not using the word "hell" more frequently. Many, without doubt, do not use it, because they do not believe in the fact for which it once stood; and yet they have not the moral courage to come out and frankly state their unbelief. They know their whole business would be gone, if they did not presuppose a hell in their argument; because there is no meaning whatever to the "scheme" of salvation, in the old sense, without a hell. Perhaps there never was such a fine piece of living irony as that there should be people who wear soft clothing and eat fine suppers and carry gilt-edged prayer-books and Bibles, and play croquet, and never deny themselves any luxury; and yet occasionally, in a perfunctory way, let the world understand that they believe their neighbors will be eternally damned. Not one of us could sleep at night if we knew our child was burning his little

finger; but there are tens of thousands of preachers in this country who have no logical reason for ever mentioning the name of Jesus again, if there is no hell, and who yet are the most comfortable worshippers of fashionable society, and would really suffer more pain at a misfit in their gloves than at the death of an unconverted neighbor, who, according to their creeds, is to suffer forever.

But, nevertheless, the masses believe in some kind of a hell. Many politicians profess to believe in it, because they think it is safe. Nearly all criminals believe in it; and many good people, who are thoughtful and progressive in many directions, are really tortured by a feeling that there may be something terrible after death. There are earnest people who never lie down at night, nor look up into a dark storm where lightnings glare, nor stand at a new-made grave, nor hear the name of "God," without being made to suffer torture at the thought that, if they should die, they might awake in everlasting torture. How can they help it, when all their religious education is based on such texts as these: "Prepare to meet thy God." "This night thy soul may be required of thee." "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting punishment." How can they help it, when tracts are placed in their hands with such titles as these: "Is your soul insured against everlasting fire?" "If you were to die to-night, where would eternity find you?" "No salvation out of Jesus." "Who can endure everlasting burnings?" Timid people talk about the danger of negative criticism; but, if a man could do nothing else in this nineteenth century than help to destroy all belief in a theology with such a doctrine, it would be glory enough for one life.

We need not take up the battle between the sects, quoting text against text. There is a theory of universal salvation which is just as unscientific and, to me, has just as little proof as the old doctrine of hell. It is, of course, more just and moral. It is simply absurd, however, to declare dogmatically that the New Testament teaches this doctrine, or that it does not teach it, because the New Testament is not a single book. It is a collection of the opinions of different writers during about one hundred and fifty years, who do not always agree. Their writings show changes in opinion, the farther away they lived from the days of Jesus. It is interesting for us to examine the New Testament in order to find out the growth of this doctrine; but, as the Fourth Gospel teaches doctrines almost directly opposed to the Apocalypse, it is simply absurd to quote as if all had been written by one infallible man. Besides, it has not been because text has been set against text that there has been a growth of unbelief in regard to this immoral doctrine. It has been the sceptics, the scientists, and philosophers,—such men as Voltaire and Descartes and Montaigne and Darwin and Spencer,—whose facts and rational spirit have undermined the old theological structure, and brought real hope to man; although, of course, the early Scriptural Universalists did much in this direction.

Then, it is assumed by all who hold this doctrine in any form: first, that it is fundamentally connected with religion and morality; and, secondly, that it was specially revealed as a truth. Our duty here is then to examine briefly these two assumptions.

Let us first, then, examine the nature of the theory it-

self. It is not a moral and a religious doctrine, but is opposed both to morality and religion. It is utterly immoral for any being to create a man and then punish him eternally, and no quibbling can ever make it anything else. A god who at least, according to the theory, permits a man to be born with a nature so sinful that he cannot obey or believe, and then damns him for following that nature, is as immoral as a Jenghiz Khan, who slaughtered his wives and thousands of his enemies. Atheism becomes a virtue in the presence of a god like that. Not one of us would harm a helpless child; but is a god so much less moral that he can delight in endless suffering? The true believer is the man who believes so much in justice and law that he denies that the universe is under the control of a demon. We might fear such a being, if we were compelled to believe in his existence; but we could not respect or love him. It would be a positive virtue to hate him with an eternal hatred. The poem "Despair," which is supposed by some to illustrate the danger of Agnosticism, is at least as severe on the Church god:—

"Ah yet—I have had some glimmer, at times, in my gloomiest
woe,
Of a God behind all—after all—the great God for aught that I
know;
But the God of Love and of Hell together—they cannot be
thought,
If there be such a God, may the Great God curse him and bring
him to naught."

As a matter of history, the doctrine of hell has killed out religious aspiration, and a consciousness of a great moral ideal, wherever strongly believed. You must go

to the poets of the past — often infidels — to find much that is really elevating and inspiring. The writings and sermons of the theologians have been generally cold, mechanical, and devoid of aspiration. There are, of course, many religious people who theoretically hold this doctrine, but their real aspiration does not go out to their Church god. Practically, they set up an ideal being which they call Jesus, and into whose character they put all their modern conception of nobleness, and worship him, or else their real aspiration goes out to nature or to an indefinite mystery. Jesus is simply, to many noble people, the name of an ideal being, who comes between them and that god whom they may fear and desire to placate, but whom they never can spontaneously love and adore.

But this doctrine has always been immoral, because it has made men coarse and cruel. No one theory has ever tended so much to make men hard-hearted. As Mr. Lecky has well shown, it has been the basis of all religious persecution. If men were to be damned forever unless they accept a certain belief, then, logically, other men were excusable for using any means to make them accept that belief. Consequently, any persecution has been thought excusable that would tend to increase the faith. Here is the basis for all baptisms by force, for all inquisitions, and for the hanging of supposed witches. Men sang *Te Deums* at St. Bartholomews, and held thanksgivings over the hanging of witches, and were heartless alike at the trials of Jews and heretics. Pagan Rome was never so cruel as historical Christianity, because Rome only punished slaves or supposed traitors, but the Christians punished all classes. The Scotch

clergy, under this belief, were as hard-hearted and cruel as barbaric worshippers. But we need not go back even to Scotland and the eighteenth century to see the hardening effects of this doctrine. Professedly, Christian people here in New England rejoice in the doctrine of hell. They say they do not wish all men saved. They wish some men punished in the next world. Heaven would be robbed of half its glory, if the crowd could enter. Many have much satisfaction in the belief that their neighbors will be punished. Even Dante put his enemies into his *Inferno*. Hell is considered a splendid means for satisfying malice; and, therefore, as the doctrine tends to make men heartless, selfish, and unsympathetic, it tends to immorality.

But the doctrine has always tended to make men immoral, because it has been connected with the idea that goodness is somehow separate from natural good conduct. Here, you will understand my meaning when I said that criminals nearly always believe in hell. Even Guiteau, the assassin of the late President, as was shown in the testimony, thought the majority of the race was to be damned. He thought, as all criminals think, that hell is to be the punishment of all who do not believe in an atonement. There has hardly a criminal suffered in this century that has not professed belief in this doctrine before death, and taken comfort at the last in the belief that his faith in an atonement would somehow save him from the wrath of his god. All this, too, very naturally grew out of the philosophy on which the theory of hell is based. Let one fundamental fact be remembered here, that the idea of hell as a punishment for immorality, or a place of retribution, is no original part of the doctrine.

Of course there are many cultivated people who are anxious to be saved from everything which will degrade them in character, but they did not obtain such an anxiety from their scheme of salvation. In that "scheme," sin means an entity which causes a man to be under the wrath of a god, and for which he may be punished after death. Salvation means a process by which a man may get that sin put out of the way and escape punishment. But the very noblest men may be punished, we are told; morality does not count for anything. "Morality is but filthy rags." Consequently, this salvation has no direct connection with every-day morality. In order to please God and be saved from punishment, men have acted immorally; for the God has given commandments without any regard to conformity to the nature of things.

Besides, to teach men that the prime business of life is to avoid punishment by a substitution or a faith tends to take away their attention from actual wrong-doing and its consequences. It makes criminals, it makes church-members who are defaulters, and it makes children selfish, because they learn to feel that their principal object is to avoid the wrath to come, and that by a mechanical process; and therefore they do not feel the absolute necessity of working out their own salvation from everything that is coarse and naturally wrong. Teach men that by simply believing in Jesus in a dying hour they can be saved, and it tends to make them careless about their conduct here and now. Church-members often say that, if there is no hell, there is no motive for goodness; that, if they could be persuaded there was none, they would have a good time, meaning by that they would satisfy their sensual and selfish desires to

the utmost. You cannot get along without a devil and a hell, men tell us. Surely, this is a candid confession; but it strikes rather a hard blow at the assumption that this doctrine tends to morality. Morality has reference to good conduct between men. A moral man is one who seeks so to live as to make others happy in this world. But here are men in the churches who care nothing about good conduct between men in itself, but only act in a certain way to escape hell. They really wish to be immoral, but are prevented in their outward actions by a fear of the future. The fact is that, if men gave up their belief in hell, it might temporarily make them careless about ten thousand arbitrary customs; but as morality relates to natural good conduct, which is necessary for social happiness, and as it is found out by experience, a disbelief in that old doctrine would not destroy it. On the contrary, such a disbelief would tend to make men observe the natural effects of conduct, and in the end would make them more moral.

The other assumption is that this doctrine has been specially revealed. This assumption is especially based on the supposed teachings of the Bible in the use of the word "hell." Let us, then, as briefly as possible, look into this word "hell" in the light of modern research. In the first place, no idea of any future life, in our modern sense, existed among the ancient Hebrews. There is no doctrine of immortality in the Old Testament. The Hebrew race, instead of having a special revelation on this question, was really behind other races, and had no doctrine of future rewards and punishments. The man "after God's own heart" was to be rewarded here and now by having large flocks and children and material

prosperity. Jahveh was a god who rewarded his followers in the present life. The Hebrew word translated hell is "Sheol." Our translators have translated Sheol sometimes "grave" and sometimes "hell"; but neither translation is exactly correct. Sheol meant the dark underworld of departed spirits. Hades is the Greek word which expresses the same idea. Sheol, however, did not mean a place of punishment, but the abode after death of good and bad alike. It was at first an indefinite, mysterious region, in which many primitive nations have had a belief. The idea of an underworld grew from the custom of burial in the ground or in caves. It was supposed that all the dead went into a great hollow underworld. There, the primitive man left the dead, and had no very clear conception of their condition. By a gradual development, however, men began to divide off their underworld. The Zoroastrian dogma of the resurrection only reached the west about 400 B.C. After the captivity, when the Jews had come in contact with Persian thought, there grew up a belief in a distinction between those who inhabited the underworld. In the time of the Maccabees, when the Jews were so discouraged, they began to have a hope of a resurrection from Sheol. For the first time in their history, the idea of moral retribution entered into their conception of Sheol. Surely, they began to think, their enemies would not be heard of again, but the Jews would arise from Sheol. The Apocalyptic Book of Enoch is the first one that shows the new idea, borrowed from other religions. In the same Book of Enoch, too, is found the origin of the Gehenna of fire and the lake of fire and brimstone. Near Jerusalem was the Valley of

Hinnom, in which, in ancient times, children were offered up in sacrifice to the god Moloch. Josiah forbade this sacrifice of fire, and devoted the valley to be the perpetual abode of corruption. Here were thrown dead bodies and the filth of the city to be continually consumed by a fire which would not be permitted to die out. The writer of the Book of Enoch used this as an illustration of the punishment which would fall upon the enemies of the Jews. That book, not admitted into the canon, is really the origin of our modern idea of hell-fire. By a gradual process grew up the idea of Paradise, which was really the old Eden projected into the future. Here, then, we have an interesting development: first, an indefinite underworld; then, Gehenna as a part of that underworld; and Paradise either as a part of it or beyond it.

We now come to the question as to what Jesus thought and taught. It is illogical for men to decide in advance that he could not have believed in such a terrible doctrine. We have no logical right to put our modern ideas into his mouth and make him out a liberal of the nineteenth century. There was a moral side to his teaching that is permanent; but there was also another side, in which he reflected Jewish conceptions. But, nevertheless, I do not believe he ever taught this doctrine, merely because it was entirely outside of his purpose. Nobody knows that he ever uttered the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew; and, if he did, it was not probably with reference to a future life after death. The word which our old translations sometimes give as "eternal" and sometimes as "everlasting" does not necessarily mean *forever*, but only *age-long*. But, if Jesus

uttered those words, he was following a different idea from our modern believers. He expected to set up a kingdom on earth during that age. The day of judgment was to be before that generation had passed away; that is, men were to be judged by his moral standards as to their fitness to enter his kingdom. All opposers of that kingdom would of course suffer then and there. The Gehenna of fire was only a symbol, not even of future life, but of what his enemies would endure during that generation. But Jesus died, and did not set up the kingdom. As he did not come back, the primitive Church took up texts of the early writers and traditional sayings of Jesus, and arbitrarily made them refer to a future life. There is not one reason to doubt but a large part of the New Testament was written under the belief that Jesus was coming back in that age, and that his enemies would suffer; and future hell-fire has been arbitrarily put into the mouth of Jesus, when he was talking about the earth. The writer of the Fourth Gospel, written long after the Apocalypse, attempts to spiritualize the bald and literal conceptions of earlier writers.

Now let us sum up this too hasty description of this ancient conception. The doctrine of hell was not specially revealed, but came from Persia. All religions have had their dark underworld; but, in the beginning, none have had a future place of punishment. There is not one original idea about the whole scheme of the future life. Even the doctrine of Christ's descent into Hades grew out of a legend recorded in the Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus; and other theologies have similar accounts.

Hell is merely the localization of any human concep-

tion of misery and suffering. Instead of being a place foretold by revelation of God, it is a creation of the imagination, manufactured out of man's dread of death, his desire to have his enemies punished, and his consciousness that some evil will follow all wrong-doing. Sin is the concrete form of man's sense of mal-adjustment, Satan is the personification of all adverse forces in the universe, hell is the localization of all the sorrows and sadness and penalties of humanity.

In one word, here, unless all the false philosophies and theories of all the crude religions of the world are true, there is no authority whatever for our modern idea of hell. Instead of being a revelation, it is a doctrine formed out of the ignorance and superstition of ancient times.

All too long have I kept you, and yet not long enough to do justice to the theme. Let me conclude with what I believe to be positive truth. You may wonder why I should treat the doctrine of hell and salvation in one discourse. It has been simply because they could not be logically separated. Salvation has always meant, in some form, deliverance from the wrath of a god and escape from punishment. I would do full justice to those men who protested against the harsh old doctrine and pleaded for universal salvation. But, although on the side of feeling they were correct, they were logically wrong. They decided that all men would at death be swept into heaven, as God was too good to make men suffer. Some believers in universal salvation say that there may be suffering after death; but, because of the atonement of Jesus, all will at last be saved. Both of these theories, although sentimentally superior, are merely fictitious.

They presuppose that suffering is the direct infliction of a personal god. But we know now that all suffering merely implies mal-adjustment, and does not mean personal infliction, sent for either discipline or punishment. There is no ground for any salvation, therefore, builded on any such theory. There is no anthropomorphic god who sends suffering directly on men. What we do know is that this is a universe of natural law. Whenever we break a law of our being, we suffer. Whenever we set in motion certain evil causes, we cause suffering in others. The only hell, therefore, is natural penalty and consequences. If there is another life, by analogy we may reason that all evil will have its natural penalty in loss or suffering. The only salvation that is real is that we shall be saved from our passions and evil tendencies, and that we shall be brought into right relations with each other and with the universe. The hells which trouble us are not some places where a god might torment us, but those sufferings, those pangs of remorse, which follow us in consequence of evil conduct. There are hells real and terrible, that are deep and damning, and whose fires no atonement ever puts out. Disease, disappointment, drunkenness, unhappy marriage, dishonor, the degradation of our moral nature,—these are hells that are too real to be abolished by any promise of salvation from the wrath of a god. For what we need to know is how to be saved from ourselves, and not from a god or devil. How can we be rid of the evil consequences of wrong-doing, here and now, in the only world of which we have any positive knowledge? Moreover, how can men save the victims of their passion or selfishness, upon whom they have brought natu-

ral and terrible suffering? The natural consequences of wrong-doing have no atonement in this or any other world. The salvation of the Church is therefore just as fictitious as the old hell of the Church. The real salvation is that we shall be delivered from the natural penalties which result from all transgressions of natural law. We must save ourselves as far as possible from the tendencies of the imperfect organism we have inherited, we must save ourselves from the effects of imperfect sewers and filthy streets and unhealthful houses, and from all ideas and associations that tend to degrade us and make us unhappy. We will save men at large by giving them better surroundings and loftier ideas. We must save children from the dens of filth and vice, save men from drunkenness and sensuality. We must help to save society by locking up or punishing those men who stand in the way of universal happiness, and by setting in operation such influences as shall tend to positively make men live out their best lives. We must save others whom we have wronged by trying in a natural way as far as possible to make reparation. The only real salvation is to have ourselves and others brought into sympathy with those laws through which the universe is governed. There is therefore no single saviour of men, and there are tens of thousands of names given under heaven by which men may be saved. Every man and woman and child who saves men from disease or unhappiness or hopelessness, or mental or moral ruin, is a saviour in the only real salvation. Every physician who teaches men to observe the laws of health, every poet who fills them with hope and aspiration, every critic who delivers them from a belief in old superstitions and terrors, every

woman who wins others to a noble life by her own ineffable majesty and grace, every child who persuades a father to be heroic,—all these are saviours in the natural salvation. If a Jesus or a Buddha is a principal saviour, it is simply because he has persuaded men that it is better to live up to the highest moral laws.

Much may be done, however, even now to save men who have committed natural wrong, not by a fear of hell, but by beautiful influences. Even men who have injured themselves may be helped. No man is yet lost who preserves his ideals and fine perceptions of moral beauty. The old scars may not absolutely be removed, but there may be much life and beauty in spite of them.

But I conclude in the words of Edith Simcox, one of the most philosophical writers of our age: "Heaven and hell are names or visions; the earth is ours,—here a hell of sensuality and hardened cruelty, there a heaven of love and beauty and wisdom, with a tender smile upon her gracious lips, and yearning prophecy in the melting depths of her unfathomable eyes."

PRAYER.

THE Westminster Catechism states concisely the doctrine of prayer in these words: "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies." Of course there are different methods of expressing the doctrine, but there is practical unanimity among all believers in the traditional doctrine to this extent: that they hold that, because of prayer, God bestows certain favors which could be obtained in no other way; and that prayer moves God to do something special in their behalf, independent of or contrary to regular laws and processes. Even educated men declare that "prayer is the power which moves the hand which moves the world." Prayer, therefore, according to the common theory, is a means for persuading the Deity to some action. With this general idea, prayer is considered all important. No matter how moral a man may be, unless, according to the church standard, he is a praying man, he has no hope of salvation. If he is a praying man, on the other hand, it generally hides a multitude of sins in the eyes of traditional believers. If a man prays properly, according to this dogma, he may be converted; that is, he may have his whole nature changed, and his appetites and passions will be taken away even

in a moment. There are some things, in brief, of the most momentous importance, which can never be obtained except by prayer, and by prayer they may be obtained by a direct act of the Deity.

In order to discover what is false and what is true concerning this doctrine, we must look at its origin, and learn how certain ideas happen to be connected with it. Prayer grew up with the custom of offering sacrifices to the spirits or gods, and for the same reason. Men brought gifts or sacrifices; then, as they thought their gods wrathful or helpful, they cried out for mercy or aid. There is no evidence to show that prayer was an aspiration after moral perfection, in the beginning. That has been an after-development. In the beginning, prayer was because of selfishness or fear. When men brought a sacrifice, they coaxed their god to accept it, and either to have mercy or to give them something in return. Remember just at this point that the early worshippers did not have our modern conception of a great universal Divinity working by regular laws. Wind and water and tree and rock and grove were moved by separate gods, with fickle wills. Men prayed to these divinities to accept the sacrifice and give something back. The Mongol fire-worshippers came to Mother Ut with brandy and fat, and asked for prosperity for the king's son and the bride. It is told of a certain tribe of Indians, who worshipped a rock demon, that they brought tobacco and placed in a cleft of the rock, and asked in return that they might be kept from shipwreck; and, in a certain portion of Africa, the rock demon is hired with rice and rum. Prayer, in the beginning, was always a request for temporal blessings, or else for a deliverance from

danger. Men knew nothing about a law of cause and effect, but supposed that good crops and success in business and war came because of the direct favor of the gods. In the Samoan Islands, the prayer is that the sailing gods of foreign vessels would depart to some other coast. Even the Athenians prayed that Zeus would rain on their plough lands and plains. Many instances could be given to show that the original idea of prayer was founded on the belief that the gods ruled all nature by fiat, and that prayer was for outward blessings. All readers of the Old Testament know that the Hebrews had essentially the same conception, and prayed for long life and cattle and sheep and wealth and children, and even prayed in the most cruel spirit that Jahveh would give them victory over their enemies. A few men in the past have caught some deep meaning in prayer, but these men were the results of long ages of development. The Hindu, the Mohammedan, and, indeed, the worshippers of all religions, have prayed in the most selfish and cruel spirit. It is only necessary to read the one hundred and ninth Psalm in order to discover that the spirit of the Hebrew was once not essentially different. There are of course beautiful expressions of aspiration in some of the Psalms, as there are in the Koran and the Rig-Veda, but among the masses was this selfish idea underlying prayer.

If it were not some selfish temporal advantage that was to be gained by a prayer, it was deliverance from the wrath of the gods; for this was the original meaning of prayer for deliverance from sin. A sin was some wrong or supposed wrong done the gods, and prayers with sacrifices were offered up for atonement. The Inca

bathes himself in the river, and prays that the water may receive the sins he has committed and carry them down to the sea. The savage cuts off some portion of his body, and prays that it may be accepted as the price of sins to appease the wrath of the gods. Even circumcision was not confined to the Hebrews, but was a custom of other coarse tribes. The whole doctrine of asking for forgiveness of sins grew out of the old ideas that the god or gods were angry, and must be appeased or coaxed.

But, just here, we can find the origin of another idea in regard to prayer. If prayer is useful in appeasing the gods or getting some favor, then the greater number of prayers the better. So, at length, men began to count their prayers. The rosary of modern times is simply a counting-machine of Asiatic origin. The Buddhists had their rosary of one hundred and eight balls long before the Romanist. The Japanese have what is called the Flowing Invocation, by which water running through a cloth does duty as prayer and penance, and shortens the penalties of sufferers in one of the Buddhist hells. The Thibetan Buddhists have a regular praying-wheel, which is filled with prayers and is placed in all kinds of places. They even place it in streams and make the water pray for them, or have it turned by the winds. So they have flags with six sacred syllables, which they unfurl to the winds. Like many people of more intelligence, they fail to see that their god might as well work naturally through the winds and waters in the beginning.

A careful examination will show that, except in a change of names, every single feature of the theories of antiquity is still preserved. Most certainly there are

some thoughtful men and women who have grown away from all these rude conceptions. But prayer, as held by the popular church, is simply an old custom baptized with some new names. To find what is false in it, we must find where it exactly agrees with these old ideas of prayer which were founded on false ideas of the government of the universe. In order to find the truth concerning it, let us make a few comparisons.

First, then, primitive prayer presupposed a god who was like a man, to be persuaded and coaxed. But is not the popular conception of prayer founded on the same belief? God is supposed to be a being that can be moved to do something right, which he would not have done, if men failed to ask him. In other words, he is supposed to be subject to the influence of coaxing or entreaty or argument. Does the man who cries aloud to God, as if noise would move him to do something, who adds words to words, as if the words had in themselves some efficacy, who ends the service with the common expression that the prayer is now before God for acceptance, who thinks there is some magic power in saying in conclusion "for Jesus' sake," as if that phrase were a signet which would be honored at the divine throne,—does the man who accepts the ideas and customs in regard to prayer, which are popular still, have an essentially different conception from the one who, in barbaric times, thought his words would have effect upon his god because of some gift of rice or flesh, or because by long entreaties the god would be wearied? It is simply the same overgrown man-god, the creature of jealousy, of suspicion, and the subject of bribes and coaxing and persuasion. It is the most common thing to

hear prayer described almost literally in accordance with the ideas of Oriental courts. It is declared that there is no assurance that the great God would hear requests, unless Jesus some way acts as an intercessor. The immorality that is attributed to the god is exactly the same in ancient and in modern prayer. The old god would not do certain things, unless he was coaxed and flattered; and now we are told that hundreds of men may be eternally ruined if the god is not coaxed to put forth his arm in their behalf.

The essential unity of ancient and modern prayer is also shown in the conception in regard to the laws of the universe. All prayer for material prosperity or safety is founded on essentially the same conception. It simply shows the hollowness of modern theology that the believers in it continually contradict themselves. Hundreds of men still pray for rain or for the removal of a storm at sea, thus ignoring natural law, although not praying for the return of the sun the next day or of spring the next year. Men show their belief in a narrow, personal god, who would suspend an eternal law in regard to good health, because he has been coaxed. It makes no difference if the request is for something perfectly legitimate: just so far as it is founded upon the idea that there is any suspension of regular processes and that a god will, because he is coaxed, send to men some distinct and special favor, it is the same old belief in a little jealous god who is subject to bribes, and who rules by whims and fiats.

Prayer, too, among primeval men became a mechanical device for gaining favors, an entity separate from the desire of man, a medium of exchange. But the pop-

ular ideas of prayer to-day are not essentially different. Not to speak of those who count their beads as a man would count his money, there is essentially no difference even in Protestant circles. Even among men who ought to know better, prayer is estimated by its length, its number of details. The man who says many prayers is still supposed to be the saint, though he may be coarse and cruel and without any real goodness or reverence. Prayers are stock in trade, partly to be used to buy up favors of the Almighty, and partly to buy up influence among men. Even prayer-books are supposed to be very holy things in themselves, and many are the pious stories told concerning the lives they have saved in battle when carried over the heart.

We have already seen that among the ancients prayer was used for the most selfish purposes. We cannot stop to make comparison in all details, but there is abundant evidence that prayer is still used for the most selfish reasons. When a man asks for rain that may injure his neighbor's crops, it is not one particle more holy, even if ended with the name of Jesus, than the Moslem's prayer for curses on infidels. It would be difficult to overestimate how much selfishness children have learned through the prayer theory which is so popular. They are told they can have anything they want; and so, no matter if the farmer's grass may be dying for want of rain and his flocks famishing for water, the little selfish tyrant with his little prayer-machine concludes to make his god not have it rain, because he wants to go to a picnic. Even in a higher sense, can there be anything more selfish than this everlasting talk about "saving one's soul," — to use the ordinary phrase, "giving God no rest" in order that some imaginary forgiveness may be obtained?

The men of antiquity used prayer as a means of injuring or destroying their enemies. But we need not search very long to find men, in churches, who use their prayers in order to thunder out their wrath upon enemies. No name of God has been more often used than that of the "God of battles." No phrase is more often quoted than the old Hebrew one that he rules in the armies of heaven, and that "Jehovah is a man of war." Many times, God is implored to aid a certain side in a battle; that is, to murder men and leave women widows and children orphans, and, as if he needed a great deal of urging, he is coaxed and almost threatened, in order to induce him to "make bare his arm." The polemical partisan preacher will use his prayer in order to pour out the vials of his wrath upon some political enemy. A clergyman recently asked the Almighty to "forgive, if thou canst, the sins of our governor"; that is to say, a man will take a cowardly retreat behind a custom called prayer, to slander a man who has no opportunity to answer back. This is no pleasant theme to which to allude; but, as we hear so much to-day about the loss of faith in prayer on the part of rationalists, it is quite important to see what it is we are losing. It would be a blessed loss, surely, if the average prayer should forever cease. In traditional churches, every quarrel must be preceded with prayer, and that prayer, too, is quite often an argument in behalf of a client. There is perhaps more latent slander in the average prayer than in ordinary conversation. The whole custom of publicly praying for individuals is simply cruel and often slanderous. Not to weary you, let me call your attention to one example. Dr. Crosby gave a lecture in Tremont Tem-

ple in favor of a calm view of temperance. His calm view did not suit some extremists. It is reported that on the following week a distinguished clergyman of Orthodoxy uttered this prayer: "Bless that Rip Van Winkle of the temperance cause who was here on a recent occasion, and give him a baptism of common-sense, to teach him that Christ was not a gluttonous man nor a wine-bibber, and to let the light of modern times shine in upon his dark and benighted mind." Now, it is difficult to see much difference between such a prayer and that of the Moslem or the ancient savage, when he asked a curse upon his enemies. There is not one spark of aspiration in it, not one suggestion of ideality or reverence. We hear much about irreverence to-day from traditional believers, but is there any reverence in that familiar way with which men use the name of the Infinite to express their petty spites and propagate their narrow dogmas? All true men are reverent; but the really reverent man is so hushed before the Mystery, so full of sad wonder and longing, that sometimes he cannot speak at all, and, if he speaks, it is with bated breath and gentle words and with a broad tenderness and charity.

But let us notice positively the errors underlying this church doctrine.

In the first place, then, prayer, as popularly conceived, is founded on a lack of faith. It is true that praying people pretend to have the monopoly of faith; but real faith must include confidence in the infinite power and laws of the universe, confidence that certain natural causes will produce certain effects. The man of faith believes that when he has done the best he can, when he

lives up to the best he sees, he need not fret himself. But, according to the prayer theory, God is not to be trusted that way. If he is not coaxed and flattered, he is likely to become angry and let the universe go to eternal ruin. God, we are told, is our creator, and placed us here; but it will not do to trust him to take care of us. He might forget his business, if he were not continually urged. This, we are told, is faith in God.

I do not wish to ignore any sentiment in this matter, because sentiment has its proper place. But, with full recognition of a parent's deep, anxious love for an absent child, for instance, which is the deepest faith,—to feel that we must move a god to do something in a child's behalf, or to feel that, when we have used all rational means, then, even when we are dead, the dear ones can never drift beyond universal law and the Supreme Power?

But this popular prayer theory persistently robs us of all faith in the laws of the universe. Some of us can go about our accustomed labor, because we believe that there is such a stability about things that certain conduct will invariably produce certain results. But how could the painter ever sit down before his easel, if he really thought that God answered prayer by the suspension of laws? He paints his picture, believing firmly in the laws in regard to the effect of light. Do you ask what this has to do with the answer to prayer? Consider for one moment. We are told that, in answer to prayer, God will make a storm at sea to cease. Now, what is the cause of a storm at sea? In the first place, it is the currents of air, or the wind, acting upon the body of waters. But there would be no winds, if it were not for

the effects of the heat of the sun upon different portions of the earth's surface. But there would be no solar radiations, that is, no heat, were it not for the mutual gravitation of the parts of the body of the sun. So the real cause of the storm at sea lies back in the laws of the sun. In order, therefore, that Jones or Smith should get an answer to his prayer to have the storm cease, it is necessary to change the nature of the sun. But, when that is changed, the painter loses his faith in the laws of light, and can no more venture to attempt a picture. He has no assurance that Jones and Smith may not conclude any day to have the whole laws of the universe changed. Now, we must remember that, according to the prayer theory, God is not the real ruler of the universe, but the church-members, Jones and Smith, because we are told by high authority that prayer is the power that moves the hand that moves the world. So God is a mere agent, and the real powers are the men who pray. Consequently, our universe is under the control of the prayer-meeting, and we know not what day bread may become poison and arsenic palatable, because the cause of death by consumption or cholera is essentially the same as death by arsenic, and yet we hear that prayer can save the sick. But, in order that it may save them, the properties of bad food and weak lungs must be changed, the world must become a world of chance, and arsenic may become any day the bread of life. For myself, if I believed in direct answer to prayer, I should give up faith in the universe, because the men of the most faith in prayer are often the most ignorant ones in the community. The less they know about the laws of things, the greater will be their credulity, and,

by their "presto, change!" Emerson becomes a beggar because he is too intellectual, and Pomeroy becomes a saint, like Paul.

But the believers in the prayer theory say that God can do anything he pleases, when we suggest that this is a universe of law, and that he can easily suspend a law or make a new one. We need not take time to answer such an assertion. The fact is that, whatever *might* be the method of the universe, we are bound to observe how things *are*; and the actual fact is that the universe works always and everywhere by regular laws which are never suspended. The proposition to be proved, therefore, is not what might be done, but that God does suspend regular laws in answer to prayer. In regard to that point, it is sufficient to state that there is not a well-authenticated case on record that any law of the universe was ever suspended. No intelligent man ever saw a law of the universe suspended, no sick man was ever cured by prayer, no plague was ever stayed, no storm was ever made to be quiet. All accounts of the suspensions of law in answer to prayer have either come out of a past in which men knew nothing about the nature of evidence, and rest on records that are unreliable, or else come to-day from nervous, credulous men and women. Every one to-day, if the truth were known, has its origin in ignorance or fraud or credulity. Undoubtedly, the hope or faith of a man has an influence upon certain kinds of disease. Many local diseases are undoubtedly affected when by any means, however simple, the mind is filled with confidence enough to create effort. But, as Dr. Hammond has well shown in regard to the cures at Lourdes, France, no chronic cases have

been cured. Many diseases are largely caused, or allowed to remain, because of despondency or a lack of activity. Remove the despondency and fill the mind with hope, and the patient will put forth the very effort that was needed all the time. There was an excellent opportunity for the believers in literal answers to prayer to prove their theory true by accepting the plan of Sir Henry Thompson, through his friend, Prof. Tyndall. That gentleman very fairly proposed that the matter be tested by all praying men asking for the recovery to health of all in a certain ward or hospital, but believers did not venture to accept the test. The test has been already made practically however in the case of President Garfield, who had more prayers offered for his recovery than were perhaps ever said in behalf of one man.

But there is the best of evidence that the world of mind has its laws, too, just as exact as the world of matter, and that there is no short road to perfection or purity, no miraculous influence on human thought, any more than there are miracles in the physical universe. All these wonderful answers to prayer can be explained in exact consistency with the laws of mind. Mr. Moody asks his god to influence the multitude, but he takes care to let the multitude hear him ask, and hear his arguments for his belief, and also to touch the emotions by the kind of music that would naturally influence men of a certain class. George Müller pretends that he has kept up his orphan school in England simply by praying for money; but he takes care to advertise the fact that such is his method, and he knows perfectly well that is the best way to persuade certain people to give their money.

Not only is it true that there is never any suspension of law in answer to prayer, but such an idea is founded on absurdity. The only reason this doctrine, like many others, still holds possession of so many minds is because men will not stop to think long enough to see the consequences of their own logic. A sailing vessel starts from New York to Liverpool. In mid-ocean, it meets a vessel going in the opposite direction. The masters of both vessels are firm believers in answers to prayer. The captain in the vessel for Liverpool prays for a favorable wind, the other master prays for a wind to suit his vessel. But unless a wind can blow in two directions at the same time and place, it would be exceedingly difficult for the controller of the winds to answer the two prayers. Of course, a compromise might be effected, and a side wind made to blow. But here comes another vessel from the south seas, with a captain praying for a favorable wind too, and he finds a wind blowing straight against him. No wonder we are to ask no questions about prayer, but are to shut our eyes and become credulous.

But the popular theory of prayer tends to immorality. It tends to make men trust in an artifice to obtain certain results, instead of seeking to obey the natural laws under which they are born. No one can estimate how much of the carelessness and indolence and immorality of society is caused by the belief that by a prayer all the evils of a life can be removed. Even in its most spiritual form, the idea that in answer to prayer a god will do something for us directly, which we ought to do for ourselves, is positively injurious. Now, what are spiritual blessings? A man has spiritual culture in the only real

sense, when his whole nature is perfectly developed and brought into moral harmony. In order to be "spiritually blessed," to use that common phrase, a man must have right ideas; that is, he must be a careful thinker, he must have control of his passions and appetites, he must cultivate his aspiring and emotional nature in consistency with truth. He is a good man in a true sense, when he is good for all for which men exist. But no man can obtain culture by prayer. It takes years of study to obtain the ideas that are necessary for culture, it takes discipline and self-control to bring the passions into subjection, it takes a fine nature, partly received by inheritance and partly formed by training, to have noble aspirations. According to the prayer theory, however, there is some short cut to this manly culture. A man is not to spend long years of study and self-control in order to make himself pure and thoughtful and noble, but a god is to do it for him instantaneously. As a consequence, the men who really accept this idea give up their own self-culture, and trust in a form. Arsenic is a poison when taken into the system, drunkenness degrades, sensualism destroys both mind and body, a failure to read books and cultivate thought-power will leave men in ignorance, trifling with the holiest emotions at last brings heartache, the failure to follow conscience lowers the whole moral nature. But, just so long as men think that by some moment's cry they can move a god to change the natural consequences of conduct and keep their evil from its destructive work, just so long will it tend to immorality. Moreover there are men who deliberately do wrong with the feeling that by a prayer they can receive forgiveness and everything will be as well as before.

But, now, the question arises, Will the intelligent man of the future pray? Is there any reality in prayer? Already, for reasons given, some men think the custom is injurious. Undoubtedly in its present form, and with the common idea in regard to it, prayer is often injurious. But, when men have divested it of the old ideas, there may be something, even from the most scientific stand-point, which will be real and helpful, and which, on the subjective side, may be akin to prayer. Man is a creature of aspiration, and the expression of that aspiration is the real prayer of the rationalist. It is perfectly legitimate that the longing for an ideal goodness and beauty should sometimes be expressed. Man has a longing for a larger and a deeper life; he has a consciousness, too, of dependence on a Power beyond and above himself; he wants to be more and larger; he feels, too, that he is not isolated, that he is connected in some mysterious way with a great, infinite life. After men have followed their intellects, and have done all that can be proved good, they still feel the need of something more and beyond. There is often a spontaneous cry of the nature after ideal love and goodness and purity. No matter if men know that no mere desire will change a divine power or law, they desire because they cannot help it. If their desire is strong, they cannot help sometimes putting it into words. Our desires may not be uttered perhaps at regular periods or in set phrases; but whether it be a Tyndall viewing the clouds on the sun-kissed Alps and thinking over the Mystery, or a loving mother looking over the sea beyond which is her boy, or a tempted, scarred man, there are times when the aspiring nature asserts itself, and by a mighty im-

pulse carries the inner life beyond itself. But is it asked whether or not men will still use words? We might as well ask whether or not the lover shall put his feelings into words or only into smiles and kisses and loving deeds. There is no formal law whatever in the realm of feeling. Here is where the Church well-nigh kills out all aspiration. In very honesty, intelligent men will not become word-worshippers, and be told whether or not they must coin their deep heart-longings into formal words and dogmas. And so we are in danger of overlooking our poetical nature in defence of personal liberty. Most men will sometimes express their feelings by language. But, as we may be the most charmed by starlight and silence and sweet, rich music when we cannot utter our thought, so we may be reaching out the farthest toward the Infinite Beauty and Truth when we cannot say all we wish or feel. Most men some time in life must utter deep heart-longings. Suffice it to say that we will sometimes in one moment feel a sense of Infinite Beauty which we did not experience in whole years of formal worship. Prayer is a man's own secret, and it is no man's business whether we say words or not. Conduct is the only test of character. As Coleridge says,—

“He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small.”

Just here, we have the explanation of the value of prayer to sincere people, who may have false ideas. They do not change a god, as they suppose, or make him do something; but they do change themselves, if they are spontaneous and real. The utterance of a sincere

aspiration is really the pouring out of the nature toward the accomplishment of an object. It is an intense pledge of the whole nature to use the means to obtain the desired object. Christian people have not been moving Deity, as they supposed, but only moving themselves. The indirect effect of conduct is often more valuable than the direct. All readers of *Tom Brown's School-days at Rugby* must remember the incident where the pale-faced boy dared to kneel down at night before his laughing comrades to say his prayer. Undoubtedly that boy was blessed in that action. It was not because kneeling down on a cold floor is especially helpful, or because he had a direct answer to his prayer; but because, as he had been in the habit of it before, it would have been cowardly not to have followed his conscience. It is always personally better to follow our conscience,—to pray if conscience dictates, not to pray if conscience dictates.

But you will ask what meaning there is in a public form. None whatever as a means of moving Deity, but there might be value in it as an expression of human aspiration. It is in consistency with the highest development of society that men should unite in whatever is beautiful and helpful. Man is a creature of aspiration, and man is a social being. So it is perfectly legitimate that men should come together to cultivate and express their higher nature. In order to add to human joy, music has become an art by which the grandest expressions of melody and harmony are preserved and used by men in common. Men feel that there is a pleasure and a benefit in uniting together and having their emotional nature satisfied by the expression of the best music.

The best men, too, can find a meaning in true poetry, and can enter into its spirit, even if it is not strictly scientific. We are not all intellect, and our emotional nature has its just claims, which ought to be satisfied when it can be done in consistency with truth. So it might be possible to express together our deepest aspirations. Some man of a poetical insight may utter the aspiration of all, just as the emotional nature of all might find an outlet through a poem or anthem. Mr. Tyndall, after showing the error in the present theory of prayer, shows, too, that it might be a reality, at least on its subjective side. He says: "It is not my habit of mind to think otherwise than solemnly of the feeling which prompts prayer. It is a power I should like to see guided, not extinguished; devoted to practicable objects instead of wasted upon air. In some form or another not yet evident, it may as alleged be necessary to man's highest culture." But there will be no dogmatic prayer in the old sense, in the Church of the Future. Not many men can express the aspiration and feeling of a congregation. No man is fit to attempt an utterance of the human heart who cannot express the feeling and hope of a Jew or honest infidel, as much as of a Christian, who does not utter the universal aspiration. In the future, I doubt not, the rationalist will have his public form of service as a substitute for the old prayer. Of course, it will not be a dogmatic prayer-book, or a sacrifice offered in the name of Jesus, but it will be something expressive of the universal unrest and longing. Because rationalists, too, have something besides an intellect, and how to satisfy all of their nature and yet be true to that intellect is a problem to be solved.

In the mean time, we will offer up no dogmatic church prayer, but we will nevertheless keep back no real desire after truth and moral beauty that is trying to utter itself; and we will never fear to express or have expressed for us a real aspiration for a deeper life.

MORALITY.

ALTHOUGH we hear so much concerning the probable danger to morals occasioned by a disbelief in the doctrines of the Church, yet the Church itself has no doctrine of morality. Look through the creeds and confessions of the Church, and you will find the doctrines of regeneration, of the atonement, of conversion, doctrines about Jesus and God and the Bible, but no doctrine of morality. Let us distinctly understand this statement. There are many moral people in the churches, morals are taught by some preachers and teachers, there are moral sentiments and precepts; but, in the whole Christian scheme of salvation, as upheld by the popular Church, there is no doctrine of morality.

If morals are treated anywhere in the churches, it is in an irregular, disconnected way. It is no part of any church system; and any discussion of morals must come in as a side issue, and does actually come in with an apology in the traditional churches. Let us understand the full significance of this fact. We are told to-day that a disbelief in old dogmas is endangering the morals of society, that morality depends upon maintaining the belief in an old system of doctrine. But we discover that, when we come to examine that system of doctrine, we do not find in it anything about morals whatever.

The Church does not directly demand morality of

men who would be admitted into its membership. It has no written formal declaration on the subject. A man may be immoral through his whole nature, he may have no clear ideas in regard to good conduct, he may have an organism that makes it impossible immediately to be moral; but, if he will profess a belief in certain doctrinal religious statements, he may, so far as any organic law of the Church is concerned, be received into its membership. "Only believe" is all that will be required of him, and that belief will not necessarily be anything in regard to morals. If the living officers of a church or its living members wish to reject him, they must accomplish their desire by indirection, simply because there is no church doctrine of morality. Faith is set above conduct, and so-called religion set above morality.

To any one who understands the popular theological system, it will not seem strange that there should be no such doctrine. The mission of the Church is in an entirely different direction. Its object is to save men from "the wrath of God" for a place called heaven. It is true there is much talk of saving men from something called "sin," but this sin is a fictitious creation. There is no thought in the regular church sense of salvation that men are to be saved from bad appetites and impure homes and disease and ignorance, and false political and social ideas. Some church-members are good philanthropists; but the Church does not consider their philanthropy the regular work of salvation. The "sin" of the Church is something that shuts men away from God and keeps them out of heaven. In order to get rid of that sin, a special scheme is upheld, which is expressed in certain doctrines. Jesus died on a cross, and by his

atonement men may be saved from their sin and be forgiven. But, in order that this atonement may be efficacious, men must believe. There is no other way of escape but in that belief. As a logical consequence, there is no room for morality in the "scheme." If men begin to turn their attention to the study of good conduct as necessary, it will naturally turn their attention away from "the cross." So in the past, and even still, morality has been avoided as the rival of the scheme of salvation by faith. Indeed, men and women are told that, no matter how kind and just and pure and intelligent they may be, no matter how good husbands or wives or citizens or friends, it is all of no avail and even injurious, if it keeps them from trusting in Jesus.

The old Church of the middle ages taught the people to turn their attention to the forms and services of pope and priest and church, and made implicit belief in them the principal thing. It had no morality in any scientific or natural sense. If it dwelt on conduct, it was artificial church conduct, and not the natural conduct in every-day life. Then, the Reformer Luther only changed the object of belief. A man must absolutely believe in Jesus; and, according to his theory, morality was dangerous, because it tended to take away the power of the grace of God. Faith was everything, and morality nothing. The revivalist will tell you in the plainest terms that there is no enemy to Jesus so great as the moral man in his audience, because by trusting in his morality and by his real worth he is unconsciously teaching the young that some men can be good without the scheme of salvation. He is therefore by his noble life directly giving a denial to the assertion that belief

in Jesus or in dogmas is necessary, in order to be really good.

It is true that the Calvinists have made a place in their scheme for what they call "good works." But these good works are only the evidences of faith, and of no moral value in themselves. "Good works are only such as God has commanded in His Holy Word," and might therefore be actually immoral, judged by the definition that morality relates to good conduct between man and man. Because, according to what they call "God's Holy Word," their god commands things which are positively immoral and coarse and cruel. Moreover, according to this theory too, morality is in itself of no value, because works done by the unconverted, though they "be things which God commands, are sinful." The Westminster Confession then declares, in language worthy of some humorist, that, although merely moral men sin even when they do good works, yet the neglect of them is more sinful. The poor moralist is therefore sinful if he does, and sinful if he does not, perform certain good works, or to use the famous rhyme, applying it to the moralist who does not happen to be of the elect:—

"You'll be damned if you do,
And you'll be damned if you don't."

You may take your choice of methods, but there is no particular encouragement to morality. The crucial point, however, is that there is no recognition of morality in any natural sense of good conduct, but of only certain artificial and arbitrarily commanded good works, which might be scientifically proved immoral, and which are of no value except to prove that a man has faith.

The Arminian seemingly avoids this confusion, and talks about "doing" something to save the soul; but really he recognizes no morality as morality. Men are to do things to please Jesus, and simply because it will please Jesus, though it might have an immoral influence on society. According to this system, the good works are merely something taken along with faith to aid in pleasing God or Jesus, and getting to heaven. Morality, meaning such conduct as can be proved absolutely good among men, is never considered.

But the reason that the Church has no distinct doctrine of morals can be found when we look at the origin of church theology. Historically there is no connection whatever between morality and religion. In other words, the Church was not organized at the first with any intention of either teaching or upholding morals. Remember morality has reference to conduct between men, which can be proved good. Religion has always had some reference to a god, or gods. In the past, men supposed that their dead chief was the god of their tribe. His children would then be considered gods or the sons of god. In the Russian catechism, it is declared that the Emperor is the representative and equal of God Almighty, and he is called "God upon earth." The title, "The Son of Heaven," used in Oriental countries in speaking of the Ruler, expresses the same idea. The names, God, Lord, Divinity, were originally given to the King, who was the God-King. All the law there was over the people was the commandment of the Ruler, who was a god, or the son of a god. Our very latest church teaching about the special divine appointment of civil rulers is derived from this original conception.

Originally there was no such thing as Ethics, in our modern sense. Men did not think of sitting down and devising a code of morals for the good of the people. All our codes, whether Roman or Hindu or Hebrew, are the results of a long development. The idea that the Deity dictated a code of morals, like the laws of Menu or the Ten Commandments of Moses, was an afterthought. Sir Henry Maine, in his work on *Ancient Law*, says that originally everything was decided by a direct judgment of the king or chief. These laws were *Themistes*, special decisions, supposed to be handed down by inspiration to the king. The term "a law" does not occur in Homer, but only words signifying judgments or decisions of rulers. Historically, "case" law precedes "statute" law, and the office of judge is more ancient than that of the framer of codes. Now, these facts are full of significance. Our ideas of morality are comparatively modern. In the past, of course, certain conduct was considered important; but it was religious conduct, such as in some way would bring power to the ruler or divinity. The people were taught to do certain things to appease the gods or to gain favor from them, and natural morality was not considered. All commandments were with reference to the destruction of the king's enemies, or enemies of the tribal deity, or for the purpose of adding power to the deity. Those who are familiar with the Old Testament well know that the Hebrews were no exception. All their regulations were made with reference to Jahveh. It is true that some of the Jewish regulations and commandments were good; but they were not enforced then because they were good, but because it would please their god. Modern apolo-

gists for the Old Testament morality try to show to-day the moral value of some of the judicial law of the Jews, but originally that law was enforced for no such reason. Jahveh wanted a peculiar people for himself, and therefore he commanded certain things. If he commanded something immoral, too, it was for exactly the same reason. The Jews were not to marry with other nations: they were to take away lands from other tribes by force or trickery, simply to please their god. It is true Jahveh said not to steal and not to murder; but, according to the records, he also told the Hebrews to rob the Egyptians, he also commanded the people to kill men among their enemies and the boy children and the married women, and keep the virgins to themselves. We see the remnants of the old theory even in our own day. The Sabbath is upheld among church people, not primarily because it is a valuable day, but because God once commanded it. In other words, the church Sabbath, in distinction from the rational human Sunday, is upheld because Jahveh commanded it, and simply because he commanded it.

The historical Christian Church has been no exception. Ecclesiastical virtues, measured by a fictitious standard, have been set up against natural good conduct. The early Church soon began to live for heaven, and condemned the world as unholy. A man who left his wife and shut himself off in a monk's cell in order to get ready for heaven was the ideal good man of the past. Commerce, science, human love, and genuine earthly pleasure were condemned as contrary to the religion which was solely to lead men to get ready for heaven. The cries of a suffering humanity for light and love and

help in this life have been drowned in songs of praise to the gods; and men have been left in ignorance and women without love, in order that church coffers might be filled, and cathedrals, chapels, and convents might be erected. If there has been any morality in the Church, it has come in at some back door, and merely because it might bring honor to religion. The desire to help men here and now for their own sake has never directly commanded the attention of the Church. The most cruel deeds of the world have been done in the name of religion.

Every moral reform of the world has been begun outside the conservative Church, and has succeeded in spite of it. The reform against slavery was begun in the face of the curses and opposition of American churches. All political and mental liberty has been gained in spite and not because of an authoritative ministry and priesthood; and the science which gives the light by which alone men can ever be moral has always been opposed by the churches.

The reason, then, that there is no church doctrine of morality is because the Church was originally organized for another purpose. Morality pertains to *this* world; and the Church tells about another world, and condemns this one. Morality deals with the present happiness of men; but the Church, when it is logical, declares that natural happiness is wrong. Morality shows the value of well-proved good conduct, but the Church talks of a salvation in which "mere morality" has no place.

But, although technically there is no church doctrine of morality in the same sense that there is a doctrine about God and the Bible, yet there are certain ideas and

assertions about morality in society which it is important for us to notice. It is difficult to take up miscellaneous theories which are floating about the world and treat them in any logical manner, and it will not be possible to take up in order and discuss by name every so-called school or philosophy of morals.

I wish, however, to consider the essential principles underlying the most prominent, and, for the sake of as much brevity and clearness as possible, shall group them under three general theories:—

I. There is the theory or assumption that morality is founded upon theology or religious belief. It is declared that moral laws are special and revealed commandments of a god. The objection is often made against the rationalism of our day that it destroys a belief in supernatural revelation, and therefore destroys the basis of morals. The assumption is, therefore, that unless Jahveh, for instance, once gave certain laws to Moses upon a table of stone on a mountain, and unless men believe that such was the fact, our basis for morals is gone. A stronger assertion still is that some men are giving up their belief in a personal god entirely, and in immortality, and therefore the morals of society are in danger. The supposition underlying all these statements is that morality is based on a belief in certain religious or theological dogmas. Now, in any notice of such a theory, let us keep things that differ entirely distinct. The questions in regard to the existence of God and the reality of a future life must be settled on their own merits; and I assert nothing here either way in regard to them, when I declare that morality has nothing whatever to do directly with either a belief in

God or in immortality. Indeed, it can be shown that a disbelief in the god of the Bible may tend to increase morality.

It is in the interest of morals that men should cease to believe that morality depends upon a belief in the statement that a god once gave a moral law from Sinai. Because whoever that god was, he was the same one who commanded Abraham to murder his own son, who gave special favor to a Jacob whose whole life was full of deceit and cruelty, who commanded Jews not to spare men, women, nor sucklings among their enemies, who told Moses to hang the heads of those destroyed in the sun, so that his fierce anger might be removed, and who put a lying spirit into the heart of prophets. Instead of morals being founded on the belief in a theory that Jahveh once gave a law literally from a mountain, it will be in the interest of morality to teach men that such records are utterly unreliable, that there never was such a god, and that the real Deity of the Universe never gave such commandments.

But there are positive reasons to show that morality does not depend upon religious belief. We have already seen that in primitive times men were interested in such conduct as had reference to their tribal god or ruler. Tylor, in his *Primitive Culture*, shows that the popular idea, that the moral government of the Universe is a tenet of religion, is a mistaken one. Primitive religion had no ethical element. Even the lowest races, of course, had some kind of a morality, some code of morals; but this morality stood on its own ground of public opinion, independent of religious beliefs and rites. "The lower animism is not immoral, it is unmoral"; that is, it had nothing directly to do with morality. In civilized

communities, of course, morality is recognized among religious people; but the morality has grown up independently, and quite often in opposition to the traditional religious belief, and then at last has been claimed as a part of religion. Instead of religious belief in itself causing morality, the very converse is true,—that morality, discovered by experience, has helped to improve the religious belief. Instead of the arbitrary god of the Church having promulgated morality by revelations, good men have been trying to make that god moral. So long as the world was governed principally by theological declarations or commands, so long was the world immoral. The old reformers openly avowed that virtue was not necessarily moral. Virtue, according to Calvin, was adherence to a divine law, obedience to God: a thing was good because God willed it, and simply because he willed it. It might be moral and it might be immoral; for God, it was supposed, was under no law but his own will. Luther told Erasmus that God had a full right to do what would be hateful to men, as he was not bound by his own laws.

It is only during comparatively modern times that men have tried to show that God was moral. But, if God has not been considered moral, then his special fiats would not necessarily contain morality. If moral conduct should happen to bring him more honor, then he might command it, but not otherwise. The Romish Church has deliberately taught that falsehood and deception were right, if either would advance the interests of the Church.* The Protestant Church now teaches,

*This fact is of course well known to all familiar with church history. The general reader can refer to Lecky's *Rationalism in Europe*, vol. i., pp. 393, 395, with notes. Read also *Provincial Letters* of Pascal (a

through hundreds of her ministers, that it is not best to tell all the truth about traditional beliefs, lest it might disturb somebody and do harm to religion. "Lying for the glory of God" has not been confined to Romanism. There is no logical or historical reason for the theory that a belief in a god, whose character will be no better than the ideal of any age, is the basis of morality.

Now let the fact be remembered here that it does make a difference whether a man has a belief or not, if he would be moral. The theory of sentimentalists, that belief is of no consequence, is false and dangerous. It is of momentous importance that men should believe that this Universe is builded on facts, and that it has regular laws which are never suspended. It is necessary to believe that water drowns and fire burns, and that certain conduct will invariably produce certain results for the most fundamental reasons. The moral man does believe in a Universal Power, working everywhere according to certain principles or laws. Perhaps some day, too, this recognition of the universal order and law will be considered the essence of religion. But a belief in a divine order and law, in the constitution of things, is something different from speculative theological dogmas. The belief in a personal god who can be moved by prayers and atonements is not the basis of morality, but tends to destroy it. The popular church doctrine is that in some way, by belief in a Jesus or "the

Catholic), exposing the doctrines of Jesuits concerning "mental reservation" and "justification of means to ends"; and also modern Jesuit textbook of F. Gury,—remembering, too, that a Pope re-established the order of Jesuits in 1814, and that, according to the doctrine of Papal Infallibility, the decision of a Pope is infallible. About the present moral teachings of that Church, John Jay has something to say in *International Review* of February and March, 1880.

blood," all the immoralities of a life may be overlooked or forgiven. Just so far as that idea is really believed, just so far does it tend to immorality. Because, if by some substitution men can be saved from the consequences of certain conduct, they will be tempted to be careless in their morals. No one can estimate how much of the immorality of modern church-members, even of public men, is because of the idea that is in the world that there is some way to obtain personal happiness and real success separate from good conduct.

Because the world may be losing faith in dogmas concerning religion is therefore no proof that it may be losing its morality. Morality does not depend upon revealed commandments of a god, or upon a belief that any such commandments ever were supernaturally revealed. Morality has reference to conduct that can be proved good here and now, during the life we know for certain. Even if there were no god of any kind to ever give a command directly, no matter if, when we die, we sleep a sleep that never has a waking, there are reasons here and now for certain good conduct that furnish the basis of morals. A man who cannot be persuaded to morality by the natural reasons would not be governed by a dogma of supernatural religion. It is wonderful that men do not see the superficiality of the theory that morality depends upon a belief in special revelation. But even men who are intelligent on many questions seem to imagine that there can be no morality after the belief in a supernaturally revealed moral law is gone. Even in the *North American Review* for May, 1881, we have an apparent argument for this theory from one who signs himself "A New Light Moralist." It is difficult

to tell whether this writer is facetious or really in earnest. But he seems to be criticising the rational tendencies of our age, and at least makes suggestions which can be heard on every hand. After many sensual "excesses," he says his conscience troubled him considerably; but, as there was no more of the old "binding authority," and he did not need forgiveness any more, he followed an "irresistible impulse." Before noticing his case, would it not be worth while to consider how many men who believe the traditions about Moses and Sinai and Jonah, and all else that Orthodoxy has taught them, have also followed irresistible impulses? "Irresistible impulses" do not depend upon creeds or the lack of them, but are occasioned by heredity and circumstances. But to come to this case. What shall we do with a man who sees no reason for good conduct, unless conscience is the direct voice of God, and the Moral Law the direct enunciation of Jahveh? As far as his own worth is concerned, we do not see much chance for him in this universe. The man who sees no reason for morality, unless he is supernaturally commanded, would not have much motive at best. If a man is sincere in such a theory, then, so far as the safety of society is concerned, the best thing that can be done is to put him in a place of confinement. If a child stands before a stone wall and threatens to butt out his brains against it because he has just discovered that God has made no special commandment against it, we would feel very much like letting him try it for his own satisfaction, or else sending him to a Reform School. If a man threatens to jump overboard because he does not find that the ship captain has any printed regulations against it, we would be very

much tempted to let him try it, for a time at least, and see if he found any other reason besides special commandments against such conduct. So when a man sees no reason against drunkenness and sensuality, after he has discovered that the Bible is not an infallible book, we see little that can be done for him except to restrain him and keep him from injuring others. Among rational people, we would see some reason against the conduct of our *Review* writer in the wrath of the husband whose wife he proposed to marry, or in the bad effects of such conduct upon society; we would see some argument against his drunkenness, in the fact that it would weaken his body and mind, and destroy his influence and happiness. If such realities as these had no influence, it is difficult to see how he could be helped by a belief that conscience is literally the voice of God, or that the Ten Commandments were written by the finger of Jahveh.* A man who sees no good reason for morality in a life which he expects to last seventy or ninety years would see no good reason, if it were to be projected beyond the grave. Indeed, the dim distance of the life beyond would make a belief in it too weak to have much power.

*The above was written and printed in May, 1881, soon after the *Review* article appeared. I have since learned that the writer of the article was also the writer of several articles of a similar import, and is perhaps a college president. That, however, if true, does not create any necessity for a change in my argument, which is directed against the *persona* in the *Review* who felt no more any "binding authority" to restrain himself. If the *Review* writer is, as is supposed, one who is anxious to revive the Scottish philosophy, his attempt to be humorous over morality is successful in a different way from what he intended. The world has improved in morality in proportion to the decay of that philosophy; and Lecky quotes from Laing, showing that Scotland and Sweden, which have been the most influenced by the Scottish theology, have been in important particulars the most immoral nations in Europe.

A man who sees no reason for good conduct in a personal child or a personal friend, or a human society made up of persons, would see no reason because he happened to believe in a personal god. Are not temperance and kindness and good health and social happiness realities, unless we are sure this world is the vestibule to heaven and hell? Is not pure human love sweet and sacred, even if the Infinite Power in this universe is not a person?

But we are asked, "Is there no danger to morality in the loss of old religious beliefs, even if those beliefs are false?" Most certainly there is always real danger in this universe with thoughtless people. It is a dangerous universe for people who will not open their eyes to observe consequences. Fire and water are dangerous; and so are human love and ambition and passion, if men do not know what to do with them. Some people whose morality has been built upon commandments will likely become reckless for a time, when they discover that those commandments, were not supernaturally given. But none are helping to increase the danger more than those who are teaching the people that there is no basis for morals except in a theology which is continually changing its base. How is it to help weak men to teach them that the only basis for good conduct is a theological system whose foundations are being destroyed by the stern logic of eternal truth?

II. Closely allied with this theory is the one that morality is created by artificial regulations and arbitrary enactments. This theory assumes a variety of forms, some of which we can only suggest. It is supposed, for instance, that morality is arbitrarily created. This idea

among religious people grows out of the theory that God has given certain external commands. He might have just as well commanded something else, if he had seen proper; but this is his scheme for making men moral. Morals are therefore purely the result of arbitrary decisions. Instead, therefore, of studying men and women to see what would really make them happy, and studying the natural law of things, reformers continually search about for written precepts which are supposed to be divine. Instead of examining the nature of alcohol and its natural effect and its legitimate use, men are exceedingly anxious to find out whether the wine Jesus drank at Cana of Galilee was fermented or not, and also the exact meaning of Hebrew and Greek texts. Men think that morality so absolutely depends upon written and spoken precepts that, if those precepts should be proved fallible, then, all at once, vice and crime would be just as moral as purity and temperance. In other words, it is supposed that Moses and Jesus and Solomon, and perhaps Paul and James, arbitrarily made morality for the world. Of course, with this idea, men very much fear any criticism upon old precepts, because they think if the precepts are proved not infallible there is no morality left. Even some who do not believe in religion think that morality is purely the result of arbitrary enactments. Hobbes thought that morals were made by acts of Parliament, or, in other words, that wise men must arbitrarily decide what is moral for the people. These general ideas are diffused, and appear in all kinds of forms. Among the masses there is a continual desire to do something to fix up a morality. Legislation is the great panacea. Vice and sin must be

legislated out of existence. The worst of it is, men often come to their decision, as to what vice and crime are, by the most arbitrary methods. The Mrs. Grundys, of every town and village, cut out a code of morals just as arbitrarily, and as much across the bias of natural law, as the belle of Paris cuts out the fashionable dress for universal female society. It is thought that morality is just what noisy people arbitrarily decide it to be, and that men can only be governed by the most numerous artificial regulations. It is supposed, therefore, that morality is a system of checks and restraints. Of course, morality may be aided sometimes by checks and restraints and by precepts and enactments. But there must be a source and a basis somewhere else, or these will be of no use; and morality is not a system of checks and restraints and of arbitrary enactments.

It is important in this connection to notice how the idea has grown up that men are the most moral when they are the most unhappy, and when they deny themselves of things which they really desire. It was originally thought pleasing to the gods that men should deny themselves, and sacrifice something to gratify their deities. So it is still assumed that there is some virtue in denial in itself, and that a man is not really moral when he follows his own inclinations. Consequently there are people who really think morals are in danger, if people are not checked continually, even in those things which are naturally right. There are persons who assume to be the moral reformers of society, not because they add to the sum of human happiness, but because they limit and restrain their fellow-men. It is supposed, therefore, that morality is something contrary to nature, and that

all natural, spontaneous pleasure is wrong. The confusion that is created in the world by this arbitrary method of cutting across the bias with some scheme of morals is quite evident. People who never travelled beyond their own village arbitrarily make a code of morals by which they make or damn reputations, while in other places the very things they condemn are considered praiseworthy. The morality of the best men in Germany or England is considered vice in New England. According to this theory, a man who is a saint in his native village in the morning, after riding five hundred miles in the cars, awakens the next morning to find himself condemned as vicious in the town to which he goes.

Against this whole confused theory of morals, the rational moralist enters a protest. Morality is not created by any fiat of any god or of any Mrs. Grundy, of any Parliament or any Congress. It does not depend on any ancient code or any infallible book. Morals grow out of the nature of things. A really moral man is one whose conduct is in consistency with natural law. All conduct is good which tends to universal happiness. The precepts of Moses or Jesus or Confucius or Menu are valuable just so far as they express natural moral law, and just so far as they lead men to observe and obey that law. But all morality is discovered by experience. Men have found out by their own experience, or by studying the experience of others, that certain conduct is good. But morality does not depend upon enactments. If there were not a printed book in the universe, then, although it would temporarily create annoyance, it would not at all change the basis of morality. As a matter of fact, ancient precepts have very much less

to do with our morality than is theoretically supposed. Actually, even the church-member does not follow moral laws, because of the fact that there lies on his table a Bible, which is supposed to be infallible. If he is pure and generous, it is partly because of a good parentage, and partly because he has discovered that it brings the largest happiness in the end. Some men will not tell lies, not because lying is forbidden in theology, but because they see that society could not long carry on business or social intercourse without veracity, and because they would feel degraded. Some men will not adulterate their goods, simply because they would fear detection in the end, and because they discover that absolute honesty is necessary for mutual intercourse among men, and because they have learned the joy that comes from a clear conscience guided by the intellect.

Morality is builded away down in the realities of human necessity, of man's nature, and of the laws of the universe; and nothing can prevail against it. Not only does morality lie in nature, but every attempt to check nature by artificial restraints tends to immorality. Instead of the moral man being the one who is restrained by others, he is the one who has the largest liberty. He has the liberty of his whole nature. A man has a right to satisfy the desires of his whole nature; not only so, but no man is moral, in the broad sense, who does not so satisfy his desires. All physical or mental starvation is proof of immorality somewhere. Morality is positive, not negative; free, not restrained. The mistake of the arbitrary theory has been that it is repressive, and that it makes morality to consist in repression. But no man is moral in the highest sense who does not follow every

natural desire of his being. Why should we not be happy, if we can? Why should we deny ourselves of that which really brings enjoyment? Who gave any man the authority to come in and restrain us in our personal liberty? I do not need to stop to tell intelligent men that some men, of course, will need to be restrained even by physical force. But the reason is simply because some men, by their vices and crimes, interfere with the liberties of others. Each man has the natural right to follow his inclinations; but, as society is a collection of individuals, every man's liberty is limited by the liberties of other men. The thought I wish to impress here is that the theory that morality is founded on narrow restrictions or regulations is fictitious. Ordinarily, where there is the most personal liberty to follow natural desires, there will be the most morality.

In the first place, all restraint, except of crime, is founded in a meddlesome, tyrannous spirit, that causes more immorality than the natural desires men attempt to control. Unnecessary prohibitions always create hypocrisy and excesses, and tend to call attention to one vice, to the neglect of habits which make men more unhappy. The fanatic would like to regulate the food and drink and pleasures of other people, and overlooks his own immorality.

"Compound for sins he is inclined to
By damning those he has no mind to."

Human nature will always assert itself, and nothing so tends to immorality as the attempt to force upon men unnecessary conventional restraints. Shut up the child

from a natural, healthful amusement at home, and he is likely to steal out of some back door to gamble with dangerous companions. Allow the girl no freedom of choice, and she becomes deceitful, and is more likely to fall into secret temptations. The Church has long condemned the theatre, indiscriminately. All the time, many of her ministers have visited it in secret when away from home. Now, the real immorality is in the secrecy, and not necessarily in the theatre. The real harm has come from not drawing rational distinctions between the pure and the impure. To live without amusement in our intense life is impossible: to try to do so is dangerous. The boy who is forbidden to see a Barrett or a Booth or a Jefferson goes to some low place of amusement that is really dangerous to his morals. Everybody loves the drama, and a certain amount of excitement. In lieu of that which is legitimate, the church people find the dramatic in a church quarrel, and let off the extra nervous force in some gossip at a neighbor's. Men and women will not live in strait-jackets. A true moralist, therefore, does not attempt to damn up the fountain of life, lest there should be some dangerous overflow, but only seeks to use the intellect in finding out the proper channel, and guiding the passions and impulses through it.

III. Certain popular ideas in regard to morals may be noticed under the head of what is broadly called the intuitional theory. It is not easy to give a concise definition of the intuitional theory of morals, as those who accept the theory which goes by that name differ in many particulars. Those, however, are called intuitionists who, differing from the evolutionist, hold that the

feelings of right and wrong in men are divinely and directly given, that men intuitively discern right and wrong, that there is some transcendental goodness above utility, some moral law above what can be discovered by experience. It is sometimes declared that goodness is something that "neither has nor can have any utility," and that goodness is to be chosen for its own sake. Again, we are told a man can know that certain things are right whether they can be scientifically proved so or not, that moral conduct does not necessarily tend to happiness, that there is a blessedness above happiness, and that it is selfish to make happiness a motive. I shall not take up negatively in detail this theory, but its truth or error will naturally be considered in a positive statement of the rational theory of morals.

In stating what I believe to be the rational scientific theory of morals, I shall be brief, first from lack of time, and also because I have already incidentally suggested its principles. Morality is the science of good conduct among men. Anything is good which fulfils the end of its existence. We have no method of discovering what is good conduct in men but by studying the nature of man. A rose is good when it lives out the nature of the rose, a man is good when he lives out the nature of a man. The only standard of morality, therefore, is human life. Whatever tends to make men live in the largest, deepest sense is moral: whatever tends to destroy life is immoral. In common language, therefore, such conduct as tends to happiness and life is moral. The race could not exist if it did not seek happiness rather than pain, because pain, if in excess of happiness,

would at last destroy life, and, therefore, men and morality. The intuitionist sometimes says that there is something more blessed than happiness, but would he say that it is blessed to be forever unhappy? When he talks of a transcendental moral law in obedience to which he will be blessed, does he not expect happiness sometime, somewhere? Is it any the less happiness he seeks because he may perchance hope to attain it after death? But it is sometimes said that a man ought to seek goodness for its own sake. That sounds well, but unfortunately it does not mean anything. A thing is not good, unless it sometime results in good. A thing is good in the human, moral sense, when it tends to create life. It is objected, of course, that this theory is coarse and selfish; but the objection is founded on a superficial interpretation of life and happiness. Life does not consist merely in duration, but in depth. Happiness does not consist in becoming sensual, as some people seem to imagine, but in satisfying all the human nature. Human life is deep and complex; and true morality is such conduct as tends to make a man live deep as well as long. Happiness includes the future as well as the moment. According to the rational theory of morals, a man must not only seek long, physical life and his own existence, but his whole manly life and the happiness of others. Man's nature is large and complex. It is immoral for him to satisfy a part of his nature in such a way as to destroy his whole manhood or his own future happiness. Self-denial is necessary sometimes, not because suffering is any more holy than pleasure, but because by restraining our appetites and passions we bring ourselves more happiness at the last. Man is

an animal, but he is something more: he has mind, he has affection, he has aspiration. He may become so absorbed, too, in good objects as to forget that happiness or life are ultimate motives. It is, therefore, moral for him to so control his lower nature as to satisfy and develop all his higher nature, all that makes him supremely man.

Morality relates to such conduct as tends to human happiness. Man, however, is a social being; and a large part of his own happiness comes by his association with others. He cannot therefore be truly happy or truly moral, unless he so acts as to insure the happiness of others. A man, therefore, will in the end often gain more happiness by denying himself, in order to add to the joy of other lives. So, in modern cultivated society, men talk truly about the pleasure they do themselves in serving others. The weakness of the intuitional theory is that it leaves out facts. Morality is not entirely founded on a feeling of right or wrong. That is well enough as far as it goes, but it does not contain all of the truth. There is an emotional and an intellectual side to morality. Man has a feeling of "ought" and "ought not," but that feeling is not enough. Men did not discover that murder is wrong by intuition. In the past, men with just as strong feelings have felt that murder and theft were right because they pleased the gods. The feeling of *ought* is right as far as it goes, but it must be guided by the intellect in order that a man may know what he ought and ought not to do. Moreover, the feeling is not the voice of God in the soul. Away back on the verge of animalism, men began to feel that certain things were right because they caused

pleasure, or wrong because they caused pain. Those feelings have caused certain nervous organizations and so-called moral intuitions in the race, and our conscience is but the result of certain accumulated experiences inherited from the past. We have inherited a nature which easily suggests that something is right and something else wrong.

But it is sometimes asserted that such a morality has no basis but the dictum of human whims. Blind Necessity is thus on the throne of the universe, and "Necessity has no law." But proverbs are never safe. The necessity of the universe is simply that everything works by a regular law; in other words, that certain natural causes always produce certain effects, which are neither changed by whims nor discovered by intuition. Moreover, the moral authority of the universe does not necessarily depend on a person. The authority of eternal facts and forces is just as powerful as the authority of a personal god. Authority is felt when we are conscious of something we cannot resist, no matter what we call it. There is, therefore, just this much religion at the centre of all morality: that the thoughtful, moral man is conscious of a power working everywhere through natural laws, to which he loyally submits, and which he cannot resist, except at his peril. But that in common language simply means that morality is conduct in consistency with the laws of the universe. Happiness and life are therefore the motives and standards of morality, and experience and observation the means by which moral laws are discovered.

In conclusion, I can only suggest methods to be used for the development of morality.

1. Men can be only absolutely moral when they have a moral nature, a nature or organism capable of obeying natural laws. The Church of tradition believes in the invincible power of texts and theologies: the natural moralist believes in heredity, in the value of a good organism, in blood and nerve-cells and a good natural mental power. Some men are born even now with a tendency toward morality. They have inherited from ancestors such an organism that they can easily follow natural laws. Men cannot be absolutely moral while the majority are born with diseased organisms and with vicious tendencies hidden away in their nerve-cells. We must do the best we can in our age, although we know some men cannot follow now the absolute moral law. We will teach men to improve on their natural condition. We will restrain criminals who are dangerous, and protect society in its rights. We will try to have men now living improve, and leave a better organism to the next generation. We will seek by study and careful training to leave our children better than ourselves. We will seek to aid the future by transmitting a life-force in men and women that shall make it easier for them to follow absolute morality than for the men of this generation.

2. Morality will be advanced, as men learn to use their intellect. There is such a thing as conscience, but conscience is not infallible. It is not the voice of God in the soul. While it suggests that there is a right and a wrong, it does not tell what they are. There are certain natural and fundamental reasons why certain conduct is right and other conduct wrong, and the intellect alone shows what those reasons are. In order that there may

be morality, it is necessary therefore that men should become intelligent, until they can see how things are and why they are, and found their conduct upon proved facts. No sentiment, however beautiful, is enough. There must be the use of the intellect, or science, in order to show at any time or place what conduct is the best expression of the sentiments of love and justice.

3. We will use all the knowledge of the world in our effort to teach men morals. There are multitudes of men who may be benefited by the authority of great names. Youth and children, too, may be helped by the precepts of wise men. We will therefore be glad to quote from all the best literature of the world that expresses natural moral laws. Here, we have a decided advantage over the Church of the past. The Church is literally bound to accept all the moral teachings of a book that, in our age, is proved in some respects to uphold cruelty, physical force, and tyranny. But we are not so limited. We are glad to use such Bible passages as teach truth on moral questions, but we do not stop here. We can quote from the best literature of all ages and religions. We find precepts in regard to kindness to men and beasts and birds as valuable in the teachings of Confucius and in the Book of Rewards and Punishments of Taouism as in the Bible. There are hundreds of books better than the Old Testament. The heroes of Plutarch are better than the heroes of Hebrew history. The teachings of Marcus Aurelius are better than those of David or the writer of the Proverbs.

We will therefore cull from the best literature of all the ages, from Emerson and Lowell as well as David and Paul, from Mrs. Browning rather than from Deborah

with her cruel war song, from science rather than from tradition. Wherever we find anything that expresses the natural moral law, we will gladly use it for ourselves and our children. The morality of the liberal faith is expressed to-day in the best writings of philosophers and scientists and historians. We may hope that before many years we will have collected and edited in a popular form the best moral teachings of the wisest men, in order that they may be taught more directly. In the mean time let us take courage in the thought that morality lies deeper than all books, and that, whenever we give a child a healthful organism or teach any one to observe and obey the fundamental laws of body and mind or inspire others with a love of reality, we are helping to form the morality of the future.

JESUS.

ANY one who attempts to define the teachings and character of Jesus in one discourse is liable to do himself injustice, because there is little time for details, no sufficient opportunity to properly balance one truth with another in order to make an harmonious picture, and because poetry and emotion must be made subservient to truth. During the last fifty years, a whole library has been created upon this subject. As an example of what men think necessary in order to express themselves properly, I need only refer to one of the latest works, *Jesus of Nazara*, by Keim, which in its translated form consists of five large volumes. Surely, such a writer did not write so much for nothing. The most we can expect to do to-day is to discover the most fundamental facts in regard to the person of Jesus, his rank in the scale of being, his principal idea and purpose, and the quality of his character, leaving each one to combine results into an harmonious whole. We may, however, form some opinion of our own to-day, with the assurance that we have facts enough to find relative truth on this question, even if those who come after us may have more perfection in details.

There is just this much comfort, too, for any honest, intelligent man,—that, in an important sense, specialists need know no more about Jesus than himself. After

knowing the value of our sources of information, any thoughtful, intelligent man or woman is just as likely to form a correct estimate of the real Jesus as the most learned theological recluse. Indeed, one of the very best books written on this subject during this century — *The Jesus of History* — was written by a layman. The theological bias of many writers seems to make it impossible for them to form a rational conclusion, even when they have the facts in their possession.

The only object we ought to have in considering this subject is the discovery of the truth. In order to discover truth, we must examine and weigh facts. Men often say that, in studying the life of Jesus, we must be careful, because he was either God or was a supernatural man. But how do they know? The only real way we can decide that question is simply to weigh evidence. If men have examined the facts and then have formed some rational conclusion, their opinions are valuable; but prejudices in advance of investigation are of no manner of consequence.

The subject of our study is the Jesus of history. There are perhaps few men living to-day who deny that about nineteen hundred years ago there lived in Judea a man who, for some reason, has profoundly influenced civilization. There have been doubters in the past who denied that such a person ever lived; but few, if any, intelligent men to-day reject the proof that he once existed. On the other hand, the most intelligent men know the difficulty in finding out the exact facts about his teachings and life. There is of course a Christ of dogma in the Church, who it is assumed is a complete character, with a supposed basis of fact in history, but it

is at least probable that this Christ is largely a creation of the imagination. The Christ of the Church is largely an idealized character, into which men have put their own consciousness and dogmas, without even stopping to consider whether such a person actually lived or not. Indeed, theologians tell us that Christ exists in the consciousness of the Church; but, as that consciousness has been continually changing, his character is largely a creation of their own. We are forced, then, to go to the most reliable sources of information to find out the historical Jesus.

What, then, can we know about him? We would naturally look to the writings of contemporary Jews to see what they say concerning such a person. But we find that there is almost no reference to Jesus by the great Jewish writers. Philo lived during the days of Jesus, and was an illustrious writer, but has not a word to say about him. Josephus, the great Jewish historian, was born a few years after the death of Jesus; and yet he only refers in the most incidental way to any such person. There is one famous passage in later editions of Josephus which contains a favorable notice of Jesus; but the Fathers knew nothing about it, and it is considered by scholars to be an interpolation made by the Christian writers afterward, in order to create evidence for Jesus. If for no other reason, Josephus could not have written it, because it refers to Jesus as the Christ or Messiah; and, if Josephus had so written, he would have become a Christian, as a Jew would not have rejected one he acknowledged as the real Christ. He does, however, speak of James, "the brother of Jesus *called* the Christ," in a passage which is quite generally accepted. A cen-

tury or more after Jesus there are references to him by Jewish writers, but of such a kind as only to be suggestive of enmity, and to be injurious to his reputation, if true. This obscure passage of Josephus is all we have from contemporary Jewish writers concerning one who men now suppose immediately revolutionized society. When we come to Pagan writers, we find more distinct recognition. Tacitus and Suetonius in the first century, and the younger Pliny, 104 A.D., refer to Christ and the Christians, but only briefly and in an incidental manner. The Christian Fathers give no essential facts concerning Jesus which are not in the New Testament. There were of course a large number of writings which were afterward called apocryphal. Among these were writings concerning the infancy and boyhood of Jesus, such as the Gospel of "Mary" and the "Protevangelion" and "Infancy." Many of these writings are exceedingly interesting, as they show the curious ideas of the age after Jesus, and also the origin of many Roman Catholic traditions. In the Infancy of Jesus, we read, the same as in Justin Martyr, that Jesus was born in a cave; also, that even in his childhood he was a wonder to his playmates. The water in which he bathed was lent to sick people by his mother in order to cure them of leprosy and other diseases. The remedy, it is needless to say, was always efficacious. When a small boy, he was placed on the back of a mule, and that animal was changed into a man forthwith. He made some birds out of mud, and at his command they flew away. A boy jostled against him once, and was immediately killed. These are of course only apocryphal stories, but it is difficult to see that they are any more absurd than those in Luke about the birth

of Jesus. It is a larger story which is found in the Gospel of Hebrews, that Jesus did not even have a human mother, but that the Holy Spirit was his mother; the class, however, is the same.

Our best authority, therefore, is the New Testament. But here, too, we must estimate the value of our information. Admitting that the Apocalypse and Jude were written by men who saw Jesus, they contain no historical facts in regard to his life. Aside from them, no book of the New Testament was written by an eye-witness of Jesus of Nazareth. Admitting ten of the Epistles of Paul as genuine, there is no evidence that Paul ever saw Jesus. He accepted and preached a Christ, but he gives no information concerning the real Jesus, and his Christ is an idealized person essentially different from the historical character of the Synoptics. Nothing is better established by modern scholarship than that the Fourth Gospel was not written by an apostle, and did not appear until the second century. Even Matthew Arnold, who claims that it contains some of the words of Jesus, acknowledges that it has been combined and edited by an unknown compiler, and that in its present form we do not find the correct life or statements of Jesus. But until some one is infallibly inspired to tell just what is the work of the editor and what the original material, it cannot be accepted as history. Our best authority, therefore, is the Synoptic Gospels. But neither of these Gospels in its present form was known in the first century or was written by an eye-witness. They do however show that their writers have quoted from some original tradition. That tradition, therefore, is our best source of information in regard to Jesus. We have

enough, then, to show that there did exist in history Jesus of Nazareth; and we have found our best authority as to his character and life and teachings.

In regard to the birth and parentage of Jesus, we are left largely to conjecture. As Mark does not contain any reference to the miraculous birth, it was not a part of the original tradition. The stories in Matthew and Luke nullify themselves by their contradictions, even if they were not intrinsically absurd and immoral in their tendencies. We are informed that Jesus had no earthly father. But writers afterward wanted to show that Jesus was the Messiah, because he was a descendant of David; so they manufactured a genealogy, tracing his descent down from David through Joseph, the author of Luke naïvely remarking, "(as was supposed) the son of Joseph." But, if Joseph were not his father, it is difficult to see what advantage there is in showing that Joseph was a descendant of David. The early apocryphal and Jewish writings are full of the most unfortunate stories in regard to the parentage of Jesus, and the stories in Matthew and Luke only help to give them support. The sooner, therefore, these stories are relegated to the realm of myth, the better for an ideal picture of Jesus. The fact is that there is no reliable account in regard to the parentage of Jesus, but the best of the early traditions speak of him as the natural son of Joseph and Mary.

The legend of the star has done duty essentially for the founders of other religions, and was created afterward by some writer to fit into the expression in Genesis about the "star" which should "arise in Jacob." The apocryphal writings have more wonderful accounts

of a star and a light that appeared to Mary in the cave. There is an embarrassment of riches concerning the visitors of the infant child. One writer tells us of the magi and another of the shepherds. Strange is it that the writer of Luke should give no account of the first, and that the writer of Matthew should tell us nothing of the shepherds, and stranger still that no other New Testament writer speaks of either.

The best evidence shows that he was born in Nazareth of Galilee. All the indirect evidence of the New Testament is in that direction. The details of the birth in Bethlehem are only found in Luke, where he says that Joseph and Mary went up to pay the tax imposed by Quirinius. But this taxation did not take place till about ten years afterward, the taxation would only be made at the home in Nazareth, and a woman would not accompany her husband on such a journey. The story was manufactured, like many others, to agree with the Old Testament. A prophet had declared that a king should be born in Bethlehem, and so an after-writer must make it appear that Jesus was born there; while another prophet had declared that "he shall be called a Nazarene," and so Nazareth must also be the place of his birth. The story of the flight into Egypt was also formed from a prophecy which declared that "out of Egypt have I called my son"; and the story of Herod sitting down with the learned men to study prophecy, and then slaying all the babes of Bethlehem, grew in a similar manner.

The time of the birth of Jesus is discovered by considering the time of the reign of Herod the Great, under whom Jesus was born, according to tradition. He was

born from three to eight years before our era, and our time is not reckoned literally from his birth. Our reckoning of time from the supposed annunciation and conception of Jesus only dates back to Dionysius the Less, about 550 A.D. Many in the second century fixed the birth of Jesus in the month of May, others recognized January; and June and April and the 19th of November all had their supporters. The 25th of December, which among the heathen was a day kept in honor of the sun and Mithra's day, and among the Romans was about the time for their Saturnalia, was at last arbitrarily fixed upon as the birthday of Jesus, but not till the fifth century.

So little, if anything, that is reliable is known about Jesus until his first public appearance at the baptism of John the Baptist at Jordan, that we can spend no time over the early portion of his life. We must therefore confine ourselves to his public life.

Let us now concentrate our attention upon some of the most vital questions.

I. Of what order of being was Jesus? Was he God or demi-god or man? What was his rank? We have already seen that there is no evidence that even the early Church believed in his supernatural birth. The legend in Luke grew up long after his death, and was no part of the original tradition. For the same reason, and because of contradictions in the accounts, because there is no evidence from eye-witnesses, and because of its inherent absurdity, there is no truth in the story of the resurrection. We see next that in the Synoptic Gospels Jesus is simply a man. We could not of course believe anything merely because it was in an ancient tradition, but

it is of significance that in our best records of the real Jesus he was simply a Jew, born of human parents, and had brothers and sisters. Even the report of the miracles is no proof of a contradictory belief. It was thought to be no strange thing that a man should perform miracles; and miracles were believed to be genuine, even when performed by heathen and unbelievers. There is good evidence that those who received Jesus did so because of his supposed power to heal sick people and because of his teachings. There is no good evidence that until near the close of his life even the disciples thought he was the Messiah. Many of the isolated expressions in the Gospels were undoubtedly of a later date than the time of Jesus, and were put into the records after the idea that he was the Christ became a distinct theory, in order to give it support.

But even a belief that Jesus was the Messiah did not imply a belief that he was more than man. The belief in a Messiah to come had long been held by the Hebrews in some form. This belief moreover assumed a variety of forms according to the circumstances. After the separation and dispersion of the twelve tribes, there grew up a belief that a descendant of David should at last again set up that great monarch's throne. Repeated disappointments, however, changed the details of this belief. Sometimes, it did not centre around a single person at all, but pointed to "Israel," the "elect servant" or chosen people of God. About the time of Jesus there was a general belief all over the East that some great deliverer should appear. But the Jews did not generally believe that this Messiah was to be Jahveh himself, but only that he should come by the power of

Jahveh. The idea of an Angel-Messiah is not found in any Hebrew writings which were written before the Babylonian captivity, and not in the Synoptic Gospels. But we will not dwell here, because the Jews, as a class, did not receive Jesus as their Messiah; and we are forced simply to look at obtainable historical facts. The early Christian Church expected Jesus to come back in the clouds and reign as Messiah. As he never came back, men afterward began to spiritualize old prophecies and put new meaning into Christian Scriptures, in order to make Jewish and Christian teachings agree, and in order to prove that, nevertheless, Jesus was some kind of a Messiah.

The belief in the deity or semi-deity of Jesus grew, however, from a different source. In general, it may be said that, after his death, time and tradition, and the desire to make him seem as great as possible, would gradually turn him into a kind of supernatural being. This has been the method in the case of all great religious teachers. But there is a special source of the deity of Jesus. Even Paul was influenced to some extent by the Alexandrian and Persian philosophy. Under Persian and Grecian influence there grew up a belief in a kingdom of good and evil spirits and in a "Logos," an emanation from pure Deity. Philosophically, the first cause of the theory that Jesus was a supernatural being or Logos was not because of a belief in his essential perfection, but in order to keep God perfect. God was considered too pure to come in contact with matter and make worlds, and so the "Logos" was his agent "by whom the worlds were created." The growth of a metaphysical dogma in regard to Jesus begins, in the

order of time, with the writings of Paul. The Christ of Paul is not the Jewish man of the Synoptic Gospels. I do not say that Paul did not use for the basis of his teachings the Jesus of history. He does recognize such a person, but he does not receive his conceptions of Christ from the disciples. He says he conferred not with flesh and blood: he never had much intercourse with the disciples, he gives no proof that he ever saw Jesus in any natural sense, or that he ever read any records of those who did see him, but after his conversion he went away alone for three years, and then he began to preach what he had "received" during his own meditations. Paul does not take up literally the Oriental philosophies, but he does show that he was influenced by them. In his writings, if we accept ten Epistles as genuine, we have the first reference to Jesus as a pre-existent being or the maker of the worlds. There is not a hint in the first three Gospels of any pre-existence of Jesus, but Paul constructs a different Christ, who is first a heaven-sent man, then a Lord in the image of God and the reflection of God's glory, and then he by whom the worlds were made and humanity was to be redeemed. Paul, too, was the real founder of historical Christianity with its dogmas and organizations, and not the natural Jesus of Nazareth who had neither a formal philosophy nor a church separate from Judaism. Even Paul does not turn Jesus into God; but he does place him in a rank beside him, far above all other principalities and angels and spiritual powers.

The next important step in this development is shown in the Fourth Gospel. Here, a writer of the second century boldly takes up the Neo-Platonic "Logos" and

affirms it to be the historical Jesus. "The 'Logos' was made flesh and dwelt among us." Nothing is better proved than that the Fourth Gospel was not written till after the first century. Nothing is plainer than that the writer has taken up the philosophy of the Alexandrian Philo, who did live in the first century, and applied it to Jesus. No one charges the writer with intentional wrong. His motive was of the best quality for his age. He wished to raise Jesus from narrow Judaism and make him an exalted Saviour for all men, a purely intellectual and spiritual being rather than a Galilean peasant. He leaves out all the crude, coarse conceptions of the earlier traditions: his Jesus, he writes with a master stroke, "was made flesh," and does everything grandly, and spends the last hours before his death uttering philosophy in long labored sentences. Some of the earlier writers, after the death of Jesus, prophesy the return of the Messiah; but he never returns, and so this philosophic writer turns him into a Lamb of God who is to take away the sins of the world, and makes it appear that his death was for sinners.

We cannot follow in detail the gradual development of this idea through the first three centuries. There was, however, a gradual growth of dogma. Some sects argued that Christ had two separate wills, some that the Christ never died, but that it was only Jesus who died. Then there were those who claimed that Jesus was not real flesh and blood, but only a phantasm. Gradually, however, the idea grew that Jesus was God. The name "Trinity," however, was never used in our modern sense by any writer till Tertullian about 200 A.D., and even then did not come into general use. The climax of this

dogma creation came under Constantine the Emperor. Arius denied that Christ was *eternally begotten*. He was charged with heresy, and the Emperor called the council of Nice 325 A.D. to settle the matter. No political convention was ever managed with more craft than this grand council of the leaders of the Church, where for the first time Jesus was declared God. After great controversy, it was finally decided that Jesus was of *one substance* with the Father. After this, it became heresy not to declare that Jesus was *very God of very God*. We need spend little time in summing up this point. No matter who declared a man to be God, we would be forced to reject the claim in the interests of truth and the human reason. But we do not even need to go back thus to first principles. The best records we have are those of The Triple Tradition of the Synoptic Gospels; and in this Jesus is never anything else than a man, never claims to be anything else, refuses even to be called "good," and says, "None is good save one, God," and declares that "the Lord our God is one Lord." Jesus, therefore, ranks simply as a man. We need only stop here long enough to take in the full significance of that fact before considering our next question. It will be of little use to try to urge this conclusion upon those who neither care for facts nor history. But it ought to be of some importance to those who, in theory at least, accept this conclusion. If Jesus is a man, he must be judged as other men. We have no moral nor logical right to say that he was simply a man, and then go on assuming that he was something else. The reason we have a feeling that he is, somehow, to be considered different from other men

is simply because we have inherited feelings that have grown out of a theory that he was a god. All the theories concerning his supernatural mission and mediatorial work grew out of the same false assumptions with the dogma of his deity or pre-existence. If he was only a man then, we must start new from that basis, and form our judgments accordingly.

II. We must next consider his teachings. Did he bring a new and special revelation of truth to men, and were his teachings perfect? In answering this question, we may leave out, in fairness to Jesus, all the drapery of miracles, as the deliberate work of others, and take up vital religious and moral teachings. When we examine his religious teachings, we do not discover anything absolutely new. That he took up some old conceptions and gave them a new shape and filled them with vitality is an undoubted fact. But he did not introduce a new religion. He always adhered in substance to the Jewish ideas, although he developed those ideas and filled them with a new spirit. He did not make the idea of the fatherhood of God, as God had been called a father before by some of the prophets, and even by men of other religions thousands of years before. He did not bring a new doctrine of immortality, because there is no evidence to show that he ever taught the doctrine of immortality in our modern sense. Nothing is more evident than that Jesus came to believe that he was the Messiah. It is not necessary for us to decide just when there began in him the Messianic consciousness. There was nothing strange in his belief that he was the Messiah. Not only the Jews, but even other Eastern people were looking for a Messiah to come and set up a glori-

ous kingdom on earth, and many other men had already believed that they were Messiahs. Undoubtedly, the idea grew and developed in the mind of Jesus, until it became his prominent thought. But because of that Messianic belief he never taught anything directly about a life after death. His mind was turned in another direction. His "kingdom of heaven" was a kingdom on the earth during that age. Whatever else it was too, it was to be a material kingdom in which the saints should rule. His kingdom of heaven was to fulfil in an important sense the old idea of the "kingdom of God," a kingdom on earth where the Father would manifest his power. Jesus believed until near the close of his life that he would set up that kingdom; and, when at last he saw that he would perhaps die before he succeeded, he, and his followers after his death, believed that he would come back again. Of course, he expected to be with God in a certain sense after his death; but he gives no clear ideas on that subject, and his future "kingdom of heaven" meant the kingdom that was at last to be on earth. So far as he speaks of God's fiery wrath and indignation against sinners, it was with reference specially to the enemies of the Messiah and the "kingdom of heaven" on earth, who would go down in the triumph of the saints. That there may be indirect reference to a future immortality in the teachings of Jesus may be admitted, but they are only incidental to his Messianic idea of a future on earth. He drew no fine distinctions in regard to that life. Jesus undoubtedly received many of his ideas from the Book of Daniel; and, after he thought he might die before he succeeded in setting up his Messianic kingdom, he believed he was

to come back in the clouds, and therefore any reference he makes to a future life with the Father is only to a future that is incidental to the final return and accomplishment of his desire on earth. But such ideas as Jesus may have had incidentally in regard to what we call a future life were not original with him. The Jews did not agree in regard to the life after death. Such ideas as they had on that subject were received from Persia, where, also, they received their legend of the creation. But the clearest ideas that can be found in regard to what we call immortality are in the Apocryphal book,—*The Wisdom of Solomon*. Even the so-called Lord's Prayer is not absolutely original, but is a compilation of Jewish phrases, all but the doxology, which was an interpolation of the Christian Church.

In regard to morality there is no evidence that Jesus ever intended to establish a perfect moral code, although, of course, he gave isolated moral precepts. But there was absolutely nothing new in his morality. I need not speak here at length of the fact that Gautama Buddha said, "Forgive insults, reward not evil for evil," and that Confucius said, "What I do not wish men to do to me I also wish not to do to them." There is no positive proof that Jesus ever received anything directly from those teachers, although indirectly all the great Oriental religions had affected Judaism. But there is proof that he received the substance of his moral teachings from the Jews. Not only was his morality the result of the teachings of the rabbis and perhaps of the Essenes, but, even largely, of a single rabbi. When Jesus was a child there was one leader of the Pharisees, Rabbi Hillel, who taught some of the most

beautiful precepts. There is perhaps no proof for Renan's assumption that Hillel was the real teacher of Jesus; but Jesus was undoubtedly familiar with the Rabbi's teachings. Among other things, Hillel said, "Judge not thy friend until thou standest in his place." When a man asked him to tell him the whole law in the time a man could stand on one leg, he said: "Good, my son: what is unpleasing to thee, do not to thy friend. This is the whole law: the rest is only application," which is the substance of the Golden Rule. He also taught the fear of God and the love of one's neighbor. We will look in vain to find anything absolutely new either on morals or religion in the teachings of Jesus. What he did was to take up old teachings and fill them with a new spirit and meaning, to show that beneath the law was to be a central principle of love. Where others talked of the nearness of God and his fatherhood, he felt them to be realities, and imparted his consciousness and enthusiasm to others. In a technical sense, he did not introduce a new religion; but he was himself a flower of the long development of his race. But he was a rare religious genius, he had a real devout faith in his divine Father, he was conscious of a deep inner life, he put into all old faiths a new spirit and meaning. It takes more than an acceptance of old dogmas to make a leader and inspirer of men. He took up the teachings he had inherited, and filled them with spirit and life, and placed a principle beneath their outward form, which gave them a new vitality. Among the hills of Galilee, he pondered long and deeply over the problems of evil and man and God; and, although he brought to men no new code, he did bring an inspiration out of his own per-

sonal character and meditations. The elements he added to what he inherited were his own personal, religious insight and enthusiasm, and faith and intensity and sincerity. It is not that man — any man — is an isolated being, born independently of all that has preceded him, but man may be himself a new creator of moral and religious power; and Jesus was one of those few men whose intense moral insight and earnestness and whose personal power make them practically the creators of a new moral force in their age.

In considering whether or not his teachings were perfect, we must make careful distinctions. On religious questions, we may confess that in essence Jesus had an exalted conception, although accepting many of the false ideas of his day. One petition of the Lord's Prayer shows that he believed in an evil *one*. There is no doubt whatever, if we are to accept the records, that, like the Pharisees, he believed in a mysterious world of demons and tormenting spirits. Then, in his religious habits, he was very much more like the Essenes than like the practical Christians of our day who profess to believe in him. He loved retirement, believed in an inner communion with God in the solitudes of nature, never prayed publicly with his disciples, and was undoubtedly what we would call a mystic. A modern Hindu reformer has declared that it is impossible for an American or Englishman, or any one but an Oriental, to have any true conception of the real Jesus. What would our modern active business men, who believe they believe in Jesus, and carry gilt-edged prayer-books, and observe forms, and call all men who are intense in their thought and have strong individuality fanatics, think, if

they had before them literally the man who, according to all traditions, wore long flowing hair and beard, slept out of doors often at night, went off alone when he wished to commune with his Father, and told men to consider the lilies which neither toil nor spin? The actual Jesus would not be admitted into a modern Christian Church, and would be avoided, if not insulted, in a modern Christian town. Those of us who can look beneath all forms and words to see the deep meaning, who can see as much religion to-day in a Hindu or follower of Confucius as in a formal Occidental worshipper, can, however, appreciate, beneath the local and temporary, the grand moral earnestness and aspiration and manhood of the Jesus of history. Rejecting the Fourth Gospel as unreliable, and knowing that the last twelve verses in Mark, in the old version, were an interpolation, we discover that Jesus had no doctrine of salvation by faith, that he did not tell men they would be damned for a lack of belief, and that at least at the last of his life he wanted to set up a kingdom on earth, not for the sake of Jews alone, but in order to bring life and hope to all men.

On moral questions, we may accept the spirit and substance of what is called the Sermon on the Mount. But, if we were to believe in the infallibility of the New Testament, we could not accept the morality of Jesus. Take that single expression, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin," and apply it literally to common life, and see how it would do for a moral precept. It is a glorification of faith over industry and activity. If it means anything, it means that it is better to trust than it is to toil and

spin and gather into barns. That this is no exaggeration of the meaning of the expression is seen when we read the whole passage, which concludes: "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow; for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." This command carried out literally, as it was by men after the age of Jesus, would stop all business, and lead men to go off to contemplate the beauties of nature. But men will not long be fed, unless somebody works. Birds and lilies may simply grow, but they are no criterion for men and women.

Closely allied with this is also the teaching that it is best to leave, and even hate, wife and children and houses and lands for the kingdom of heaven's sake. If that is a genuine passage, it would not do as a moral precept. There is no kingdom of heaven of half so much importance as our legitimate family and business and social relations. If such a commandment were obeyed, it would end all social morality. Early Christians, for some reason, placed a premium on isolated and selfish saintship. The monks were the ideal men of the Church, and marriage and commerce and patriotism were not considered Christian virtues. Everything was measured by a transcendental standard; and the beggar and mendicant, and the wife and husband who left their homes for the Church, were considered especially holy. The family and the home life would never grow under such a principle as this,—the superiority of some kingdom separate from the daily life.

If we are to believe the records too, there is a glorification of poverty over wealth. In one passage in Luke, Jesus is represented as saying, "Blessed are ye poor, for

yours is the kingdom of God." There is no way to twist this passage out of its evident meaning that men are to be blessed simply because they are poor. Now, we can understand how a poor man might be blessed, if his poverty were because of honesty or conscientiousness; but there is no blessing in poverty in itself. This is no isolated passage, however. In Luke again, we have a long parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The poor man is carried into Abraham's bosom, and the rich man is cast into hell; and the only reason given is that the rich man had his good things in this life, while Lazarus was poor. Not one single word about any morality on the part of Lazarus or immorality on the part of the rich man, but poverty is rewarded simply because it is poverty. Such teachings cannot tend to morality. Poverty is the cause of a large amount of crime, of drunkenness, and despair. There is no way to reform society but by making men industrious and self-reliant. To teach men that it is better to be poor than to be dishonest is moral; but to teach men that poverty is a blessing in itself is immoral, and encourages beggary and idleness. It is true that Keim and Strauss and other critics claim that these passages in Luke came into the Gospel from some Ebionite Essene source, and are not the real words of Jesus. If this be true, it is only another proof that we have no infallible record of the teachings of Jesus. There is no doubt, however, that Jesus was influenced to some extent by the teachings of the Essenes, although never entirely controlled by them. We need only look at another point in this connection, and that is in regard to the treatment of enemies. Society could not exist for a

week, if all men were to turn the other cheek when an enemy struck them. There is not a man in the nineteenth century, except the Quaker, who pretends to obey any such injunction. Our national existence depends upon the assertion of our natural rights, and the resistance of the attacks of enemies. Society justifies a man even in killing the robber or murderer who would enter a house to commit a crime. Righteous indignation in the presence of insult and intolerance and tyranny is just as grand a virtue as meekness. Not to dwell longer on this point, there is no perfect morality in the literal teachings of Jesus, if he is correctly reported.

When we give up all belief in the literal infallibility of either the records or the moral teachings, however, and measure the Sermon on the Mount by the age in which it was given, we are prepared to see in it a beautiful ideal spirit. Although Jesus accepted the ideas of his age, and therefore his teachings cannot be regarded as infallible, yet he was a superior and independent thinker. Many of his teachings that could not be received as moral precepts may have had a deep meaning in the age in which they were uttered. For example, when he said to those under the Roman Government that even the poor might be blessed, the words may have been comforting to his hearers. When so many fanatics created insurrection, too, without accomplishing any good, it might be a valuable lesson to say to men that they had better possess their souls in patience, and not strike back when struck on the one cheek. It is noble, too, for a man to rise above all personal malice and revenge, when he is insulted by the ignorant and thought-

less. No matter where he obtained it, it is a broad principle which Jesus inculcated, when he urged men to follow the Golden Rule. On the side of ideality and sentiment, the Sermon on the Mount, when freed from all that is local, will never probably be surpassed. But morality must also be approved by the intellect; and therefore men in all ages must decide, after careful observation, how that ideal and sentiment should be made practical.

But one other fact must be made prominent. The one central idea which filled the mind of Jesus until it controlled him was that he was the Messiah. In order to discover the character of his teachings, we must know the prevailing motive in his Messianic consciousness. First, then, he accepted the prevailing idea of a temporal and material Messianic kingdom. He undoubtedly knew and accepted the prevailing ideas in regard to a political, kingly Messiahship, which may be found in Daniel, Enoch, the writings of Jews of his age, which were uttered by John the Baptist, and heard expressed everywhere among the people. The theory that Jesus did not believe in any such a Messiahship is a direct contradiction of the teachings of the Synoptic Gospels. In addition to this, however, he also expected to bring in a reign of righteousness and peace, and this was the hope that was the dearest to him. The more selfish Jews wanted a kingdom in order to win personal favors, and were willing to be moral to a certain extent in order to succeed; but Jesus wanted to have success in order that the world might be blessed. Enthusiastic he was, according to our practical ideas, almost to fanaticism; but it was an enthusiasm for that which to him was a holy

cause. He wanted at the last not only to help the Jews, but to help all men; and he was undoubtedly sincere in his belief that, if he should succeed, all men would be blessed. That he was not selfish in any narrow sense is evident from his willingness to die, if it might prove necessary. The real central motive of Jesus was, then, that he wished to be the Messiah in order that there might be a reign of righteousness, and by that idea we must measure all his teachings. In measuring them, too, we must separate the local and the temporary from that which is ideal and universal. His teachings were valuable, therefore, in giving a moral impetus to men; and they are valuable still, so far as their ideal spirit can be made practical.

III. But let us next consider his essential moral rank among men. What was he in his own character, and how does he compare with other men who have created epochs in history? First, then, we must answer this question in its literal form. In intellectual conceptions, he never excels either Socrates or Marcus Aurelius; in his poetic exaltation, he does not surpass either Plato or Philo, or even Isaiah; and his moral teachings, on the intellectual side, are not superior to the Stoics. It is no injustice to say that there are many men living to-day who have much more knowledge of the universe and its laws than he had or could have. He accepted the theories of his age in regard to a little world as a centre of all, and knew nothing literally of our vast Cosmos, in which our world is but a fraction of one of millions of worlds. In regard to his virtues, no fair man has ever doubted his moral exaltation and sincerity. But other men have suffered just as much for their convictions, and

have had just as deep a love for humanity. Gautama Buddha was so moved by love and pity for men that he left a luxurious home, a beautiful wife, and an only child, in order to help his race. Hundreds of Jews and infidels have suffered just as deeply and nobly for their convictions in rejecting what the false followers of Jesus have tried to impose on them as the Great Crucified himself. Confucius, too, had just as good a system of morals as Jesus; and so, too, had the Romans and Greeks, on the intellectual side. It is often asked if at least Jesus is not the ideal man whom we should imitate. Everything depends upon what we mean by imitation. If we are to literally follow an example or to obey the dogmas which are to-day proclaimed about Jesus, he cannot be imitated by moral men of our age. Even some liberal interpreters declare that Jesus at Cæsarea-Philippi made up his mind to go up to Jerusalem to die. If this were true, Jesus cannot be our example. Men ought to live up to their convictions, even if it costs them their life; but they have no moral right to commit suicide. According to Orthodoxy, it would have been a great wrong to humanity if the Jews had not crucified Jesus, because otherwise men could not have been saved. According to any theory under which the Gospels in their present form are accepted as history, Jesus threw his life away on a quibble. Pilate wanted to spare Jesus, if he could; but the Jews had charged him with wanting to set up a kingdom in opposition to the Roman government. Pilate, in order to give him a chance for his life, asked him if he was a king. According to the record, Jesus replied, "Thou sayest it," which to Pilate simply meant an affirmative answer. If he was a broad

thinker, why did he allow himself to be handed over to death over a quibble of words? It would have been easy for him to have informed Pilate that he was not a king in the Roman sense. The best friends, therefore, of Jesus are those who reject the Gospels as infallible history, and deny that he wilfully threw away his life. We know that the disciples were disappointed when Jesus died. We also know that after-writers put words into the mouth of Jesus, in order to help their theories. It is much more probable, then, that after-writers manufactured the words in which Jesus is represented as declaring he was going up to Jerusalem to die than that he deliberately committed suicide. Moreover, it was no part of any Messianic idea that the Messiah should die. The Messiah was to *live* and reign. There might be suffering and death incidentally, but it was not in the essential theory. How much better, then, to follow the natural supposition that Jesus did not go up to Jerusalem for the purpose of dying, but that he went hoping to succeed, but in such deadly earnestness that go he would, even if he *did* die. We can see some heroism in such a course. We can understand that he resolved to go up to that city with a hope that the Jews would after all accept him; and that, with that idea, he resolved to go even at the risk of life. That would be noble; but to deliberately go for the *purpose* of dying would degrade him from the rank of a hero to that of a fanatic. That Jesus would have sad forebodings of the possibility of failure and death is not to be doubted; but that was but human, and is something different from deliberately throwing away his life. But we have seen enough to discover that there could be no safety in any

literal imitation of Jesus. Men in the early Church concluded there was some special virtue in imitating his supposed outward actions; and so Ignatius pleaded with his friends not to try to save his life, and thus deprive him of the crown of martyrdom.

The imitation of Jesus led to evil results in another direction. Jesus, for example, was never a married man, and did nothing directly for business or the home life or statesmanship. It may be very true, of course, that Jesus was so wedded to his idea and his work as to be able to think of nothing else. But we can also see that society could not exist, if men followed his example literally. A perfect man is a whole man,—a man who enters into all the multifarious relations of life, as a citizen of this world, a husband, a father, a friend. The really perfect man is he who can fill all the relations of man in consistency with the highest law of that relation. Jesus did grandly perhaps to follow out his idea; but there would be no homes nor commerce nor art nor statesmanship, if all men literally imitated him. That has been tried once. The early believers thought it was not the mother in the home, but the virgin, who was the ideal woman; not the faithful husband, but the emaciated, callous-kneed, unmarried devotee who was particularly entitled to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus, however, should not be held responsible for all these vagaries. There is no evidence that he ever expected any one to imitate him. He cast high honor upon the home life, and honored motherhood and childhood, although himself homeless; and, although according to certain records he seemed to preach asceticism, yet the balance of evidence seems to be in favor

of the theory that he wished to cheer other men in their natural relations.

The real power of Jesus was in his religious enthusiasm, by which he set in motion the deepest currents in the human nature. His religious theories are not more intellectual than those of others; but they are more full of a consciousness of a divine presence and more full of hope, whether literally correct or not. His moral precepts are not perfect intellectually, but they are full of an ideal spirit of righteousness.

But no one has enough facts to justify him in deciding dogmatically who is the most perfect among the sons of men. There have been a few men in all the ages who have lived up to their ideals, and by their genius and heroism have shown the value of a noble life. Jesus belonged to that noble class of heroes, and he is the one who has specially influenced our civilization. We really appreciate him, not by accepting the ideas that were transitory and local, but by having his sincere spirit and living up to our highest ideals and deepest convictions. We are friends of Jesus, not when we accept a dogmatic Christianity, but when, along with him and all the moral heroes of all ages, we cast in our lot with that which is seen to be present truth and righteousness. There never was a greater perversion of realities than that the name of one of the great heroes of the ages should now be used as a narrow shibboleth to check investigation and conscientiousness and science and moral and intellectual improvement in the interests of formalism and dogma.

Jesus has done his work in behalf of morals and religion, let us now do ours in consistency with the light of our age. Practically, not many modern Christians

are in the least affected in morals by their belief in Jesus. Habit and experience and necessity settle all our questions of business and of daily life. Practically, the name of Jesus is chiefly used now to uphold dogmas borrowed from Pagan Rome and Egypt and Persia, and modified by mediæval scholasticism. But the historical Jesus will be the most real to us when his name is rid of all superstition, and when it comes to us fresh and natural and full of inspiration as the names of Gautama and Socrates and Confucius, as that of one of the moral heroes of the world.

“By the light of burning heretics Christ’s bleeding feet I track,
Toiling up new Calvaries ever with the cross that turns not back,
And these mounts of anguish number how each generation
learned

One new word of that grand *Credo* which in prophet-hearts hath
burned

Since the first man stood God-conquered, with his face to heaven
upturned.

.

New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good
uncouth;

They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of
Truth;

Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires! we ourselves must Pilgrims
be,

Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly through the desperate
winter sea,

Nor attempt the Future’s portal with the Past’s blood-rusted
key.”

PREDESTINATION AND SCIENTIFIC NECESSITY.

THERE are two general theories in regard to the causes of human character and destiny. One is that man is the creature of fate or predestination, the result of forces independent of himself, and becomes what he is in spite of, and not because of, his own efforts. The other philosophy is that a man's character is in his own hands, and that he can, at least morally, make what he pleases of himself.

The tendency of men to look only at one side of a truth is quite evident in the treatment of this question. The doctrine of necessity, or that men cannot help what they are, is one side of a truth. By itself, however, it is one of the most hopeless and immoral of doctrines. In ordinary language, men sometimes say that, if they do wrong, they cannot help it, because they are only the creatures of uncontrollable forces, whether they call those forces God or appetites or circumstances or heredity. Many a villain claims immunity for himself in his peculiar nature or in his environments or in fate or divine decrees. This philosophy is all the more dangerous with some men, because it contains a half-truth.

Largely, perhaps, because of this danger, men have gone to another extreme, and have declared that man is entirely free, and that he has the moral power to do what is right and to make himself moral in character.

Against the doctrine of divine fore-ordination in theology, the revivalist sets up the doctrine of free-will. He puts it in a literal form, and says that man has the power to believe and to choose heaven in preference to hell, and that God would not go through the absurd farce of offering men the water of life, unless it was in the power of the man himself to make a choice. He is supported in essence, if not in form, too, by many liberal reformers, who come with reason and philosophy, and say that man is the creator of his own character and destiny.

But it may be that men gaze too intently on one side of life and human character. In our brief time, we cannot of course examine all causes, but we can look at facts enough to discover the general principle.

With the church controversy between predestination and free-will, we can of course have no intellectual sympathy. Both of these doctrines were founded on an anthropomorphic theology, and both of them are unscientific and lacking in philosophical breadth. It is a truth, however, that, between the two systems of theology, Calvinism, with all its harshness, was very much nearer the truth than Arminianism. It was much nearer the truth than that view of life which may be fitly called Sentimental Optimism. Of course, it is not true that man is under the control of a personal god who, ages ago, by a fatalistic decree, decided everything in a man's destiny. It is not true that God chose from all eternity some men to be pure and perfect and to win heaven, and passed by others, practically deciding that they should have such evil natures that they would be invariably bad and inevitably candidates for eternal punishment. There

is no authority for the form of such a doctrine. There is not any such a god in the universe, there never was such a decree of election and reprobation, and the heaven and hell are purely creations of the imagination, as fictitious as Utopia or the fabled islands of the sea. But, nevertheless, the Calvinist was the best thinker the old Church ever had. He saw that, for some reason, the character and destiny of men were largely settled at their birth, that men were in an important sense under the control of powers outside of themselves, and these powers or this force fixed to a large degree a man's moral standing. His mistake was in personifying these powers or causes or forces, giving them an arbitrary human will, and then declaring that of "His own will begat he us." But he was right in declaring that some things about a man are settled independently of his will, because nothing is more superficial than the popular church doctrine of the freedom of the will. It is founded on the idea that a man's will is something separate from the man himself, that the will is self-determining. The idea is that, although a man might naturally do certain things, yet he has a will separate from his nature, that can choose in spite of that nature. But man has no will separate from his nature. The will is merely the expression of the nature under certain motives and conditions. If we could absolutely know a man's nature, then we could tell to a mathematical certainty what he would do under certain motives and circumstances. His conduct would no more be a matter of uncertainty than that, when all barriers are removed, water will run down hill. His will is the resultant of all his nature,—his appetites, his desires plus his motives

and the conditions. There is no such thing as freedom of will in the old theological sense. The Calvinist was therefore right in declaring that certain men have not the moral ability to be righteous. He was wrong in attributing to the decree of a personal god that which is the result of a long succession of natural causes and conditions.

The sentimental optimistic theory of the nature of man is contrary to facts. Human nature is not all dignified, and much of it is terribly depraved. It is not depraved because of a sin of a woman in a garden, but much of it is nevertheless undignified and degraded. Everything is not lovely with some men, could not be lovely with them, and nothing could be more in opposition to facts than the notion that it is. The reason of the Calvinist is wrong. Man did not fall and therefore become depraved; but, on the contrary, he started just above animalism, and much of his barbaric nature still inheres in him. So much of it remains in some men that it is simply absurd to talk about the possibilities of all men. Some men have a sublime character, but others have possibilities only a little above the brute.

This is but a stepping-stone to the heart of our subject, but one necessary to go over, in consequence of the fact that these old theories are still held by multitudes of men.

Positively, it is a truth that there is a necessity in every man's life, and that to a large degree his character is fixed independently of his own efforts. We have come into this world bringing with us capacities and tendencies that were caused outside of our will and before our birth. There is nothing more superficial

than the idea that a man can make anything out of himself. Whether we accept certain conclusions of science or not, we all must confess that the causes of genius and morality and crime can be very fully analyzed. Even a little observation will show that there are a great variety of causes, over which a man has no control, that go to make up his manhood.

Birth is a most important factor in human character. That one man was born with a high forehead, a clear eye, a symmetrical form, while another was born with a repulsive countenance and a humpback; that one boy with curly hair and sweet lips should be loved for his beauty, and his brother barely tolerated because of his repulsive appearance,—are facts entirely outside the limits of human choice.

Even the surroundings of nature have much to do with human destiny. Buckle, in his *History of Civilization*, claims that food, climate, soil, and the general aspect of nature, are the great arbiters of destiny. It is the fashion with a certain class of critics, just now, to show the fallacy in some of Mr. Buckle's theories, and to draw an argument from it against modern philosophy and science. But no modern science or philosophy depends upon his teachings. Because some of his theories are disproved, too, it does not necessarily follow that his historical facts are of no value. One of his mistakes we shall notice; but, as far as he goes, he helps to throw a wonderful flood of light on human history. As he shows, men are very largely what they are because of the kind of food they eat and the air they breathe. Where men must labor long and hard for the means of subsistence, they have little time for thought and cult-

ure. Nature has largely defined the limits of great intellectual development. In India, the people have been terrified by the grandeur and vastness of nature. Stretching from the Indian Ocean to the mountains of eternal snow, with jungles and interminable forests and vast deserts lying between, the people have been kept ignorant in a physical struggle for life, or have been overwhelmed with a sense of the vastness of nature. The little peninsula of Greece gave to the world its greatest orators and poets and warriors and statesmen and sculptors. Galton has shown that in one century the little district of Attica gave to the world fourteen of the ablest men who ever lived. Among these were Themistocles, Miltiades, Pericles, Thucydides, Socrates, Xenophon, Plato, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, and Phidias. Buckle attempts to show that the reason was that in that land there was no great struggle with nature, and no physical terror cast over the people. Although this may account in part for the existence of so many great men, yet it does not give the full reason. Galton, with more philosophy, declares that Athens only offered attractions to men of the highest ability, and that her social life was such as would only please and draw very able men; and therefore, by a "partly unconscious selection, she built up a magnificent breed of human animals," which have never been excelled, considering the narrow space and limited time. Whether these are all the reasons or not, we can see that there were reasons for great intellectual development in Athens, and that only under similar conditions could it be attained by other men.

We can even see that nature has had much to do with

the development of a belief in supernaturalism. In a country where there are vast mountains and deep forests filled with wild beasts, where men are under the terror of the storm or the earthquake, there is much more of a tendency to believe in the supernatural or miraculous than in a crowded city, where men come in contact with each other and cause certain results by their own efforts. Amid such surroundings, it is easy to believe that the thunder is the literal voice of a god and that every grove is inhabited by a spirit. Although Napoleon said once, contemptuously, "*Circumstances! make your circumstances,*" yet it is a truth that in a large sense our circumstances make us, as that great selfish man learned to his sorrow.

Time is an important factor in the formation of character. Modern science teaches us that humanity has been developing from the less perfect to the more perfect. When humanity has therefore only reached a certain stage of development, the individual living at that time cannot live up to the morality of a more highly developed generation. Modern science teaches a decree as much as Calvinism. That decree is that by regular processes higher moral character is developed, and that therefore in some ages of the world men have been morally incapable of a certain perfection. Certain ideas succeed at one time that destroy at another time. The seventeenth century was an age of conquest, and the present is essentially an age of arbitration. Some of our radical thinkers might not have been so much hated, if they had been born at a time when their type of manhood would have been more in demand.

Here, we might be checked in our line of thought by

the objection that all this has nothing to do with moral character. Men may be affected intellectually or physically by circumstances of birth and time, but yet they can absolutely control their moral character. But this objection is founded on an old theological fallacy that moral character is separate from the body and from the intellect. We do not know anything about moral character, however, separate from the physical organism. All morality, too, depends upon that organism. Men cannot be moral in the true sense, whose physical nature is seriously perverted. Besides, all moral tendencies are handed down and preserved in an organism which is physical. Morals, too, depend upon the intellect in an important sense. If a man does not have mind enough and intelligence enough to understand the results of actions, he cannot be moral, because he may, in his ignorance, mistake immorality for morality, evil for good. Therefore, as the moral character depends on the organism and on the intellect, and as these are inherited by each man, his moral character is in one sense beyond his complete control.

Sometimes, connection with a certain race affects a man's character. We say of the men of a certain nation that they are fickle or superficial or substantial. We cannot, therefore, ignore fickleness or firmness or impulsiveness in estimating character. The climate, too, may often be the most salubrious and the soil most fertile, and the aspect of nature the most pleasing, while the blood that runs through the veins of the man may mar his whole life.

"There *is* a destiny that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will." Did the African with his thick lip

and dark skin have any choice between his physiognomy and that of the clear-skinned and high-browed Caucasian? Men are often blamed for a certain disposition or temperament. Other men are praised for the possession of that for which they deserve no credit. But the real character and conduct will largely depend upon the temperament. When we say that children are like their parents, we imply that they have been hedged in by a certain natural limit. Men are born with a certain natural moral bias. We know the coarse man or the possible murderer, when we look at the back of his neck; and we can tell whether a man is charitable or bigoted by looking into his eye or examining his forehead. The law of heredity is one of the most wonderful discoveries of our age. I say discovery; for, although it had been suggested before, it was never before reduced to a science. Blood *does* tell. By the development of certain faculties, those faculties become powerful, and are at last transmitted to children with increased power. Spencer, Lewes, and Fiske have well shown that Mr. Buckle made a great mistake, when he refused to consider race and heredity among his causes of character. As Mr. Fiske says beautifully, "A Philip becomes the father of an Alexander, the son of a Bernardo Tasso gives to the world a deathless poem, and a family of three hundred musical geniuses at last counts among its members a Jean Sebastian Bach."

Even people who think they do not believe in heredity are continually appealing to it. The most ardent theoretical believer in the ordinary theory of converting a criminal until he is a white saint, in one hour, will seriously object to having his daughter marry into certain

families. The Joneses or Thompsons always were bad, he says; and no good thing can come out of such a Nazareth. He is partly wrong, too, because sometimes, according to heredity, a child will inherit the good qualities of ancestors several generations back; and all the good qualities of a certain ancestry will often be concentrated in one individual. But the law is invariable, whether we discover it or not. On a certain record of a police court in a large city, the names of several hundred criminals were recorded, all the near or remote descendants of one vicious woman.

We have had a practical illustration of this principle in the case of our late President and his assassin. The criminal is undoubtedly responsible largely for the peculiarly vicious education through which he has passed. His responsibility before the civil law, too, must be measured chiefly by the standard of the safety of society. But aside from all this, by a scientific measurement, it is easy to see the natural causes which produced his failure and the success of his victim. Garfield was descended on one side from the Huguenots and on the other from the Puritans. The vigor of Puritan blood we know; but the Huguenots also brought to England some of her best life-blood and many of her best industrial arts. Given then a man with such an ancestry, and we see easily how he might push himself into places of influence where the unbalanced criminal, with at least an imperfect nature at birth, would fail.

Let no one make a mistake in considering this single point. Heredity is not the only cause of conduct in man. Circumstances and motives will come in to modify the hereditary tendency. There are a variety and a com-

plexity of causes, but there is absolutely no accident,—no chance,—no uncertainty. Heredity will always make itself shown under the conditions. It is a sad fact, perhaps, but it is a fact, that there are men who would always commit a crime under certain circumstances. Not to speak of crimes, it is just as true that certain men and women would invariably act in a certain way under certain conditions. Certain circumstances will invariably make some men yield to the appetite for drink. The appetite is in them by inheritance, and all the conversions or resolutions that can be made does not change it. The theory that a church conversion will in a moment change an overpowering appetite is held in opposition to the undeniable fact that certain appetites become like a disease, as hereditary as consumption. The appetite may be modified by time and new conditions, and by a development of other passions or tendencies. But no hocus-pocus can change in a moment a man's nature. In every direction, it is true that all will in man is merely the result of his nature and of conditions and motives. It is just as natural for men to love and hate as it is to breathe, and whether their love or hatred will result in good or not depends upon all the conditions. A great writer has said truly that there are certain men and women who are ripe to be each other's victims the moment they meet. They are sensual "by the superfluity of animal" in their nature. Show us the man and his surroundings, and we might tell whether he is to be Calvinist or liberal, or abolitionist or aristocrat. Some men are predisposed by the shape of their brain to be tyrannical or cruel. It is important to recognize this fact, as we will then know

how to deal with them. Mourn over it as men will, it is a truth that just so long as men are born with unbalanced natures, and then placed under false theological teaching and dangerous political customs, there will be crime, just as surely as there will be explosions when gunpowder is brought into contact with fire.

It is often said that one man is born with genius and another with a weak mind, but genius and talent are original powers over which a man has no control. Who would not sing like Milton and Homer, if they could? Who would plod along in the common dust of earth, if they could write *Hamlet* or *The Origin of Species*? Is it the fault of the day laborer that he cannot speak like Burke or Pitt or Webster? Emerson declared philosophically:—

“There’s a melody born of melody,
Which melts the world into a sea.
Toil could never compass it ;
Art its height could never hit ;
It came never out of wit ;
But a music music-born.

.

Thy beauty, if it lack the fire
Which drives me mad with sweet desire,
What boots it ?

.

Alas! that one is born in blight,
Victim of perpetual slight :
When thou lookest on his face,
Thy heart saith, ‘ Brother, go thy ways!
None shall ask thee what thou doest,
Or care a rush for what thou knowest,
Or listen when thou repliest.’

.

And another is born
To make the sun forgotten.

One thing is forever good;
That one thing is Success."

The necessity of heredity and the necessity of surrounding circumstances are so intertwined that we need not all the time try to keep up the distinction. Two boys leave the same home, one to a life of success, and the other to a death of shame. Who can tell all the mysterious causes of the difference?

"From the same father's side,
From the same mother's knee,
One journeys to a gloomy tide,
One to a peaceful sea."

It sends a hush upon our egoism when we look out on society. One man worships the stars, and another worships the Father of Jesus, because one man lives in Persia and another in the land of the Puritans. One child grows up into a noble life, because he is reared in a beautiful home or has quiet blood in his veins; and another goes to the gallows, because he was trained amid vice and degradation. And, as a power has been working out our character even before we were born, so we will be great or good, as we are moved upon now by certain influences. Whatever theory we may have about a divine power in the universe, we know that character is largely moulded by a capacity to be impressed by certain outside influences. Some men, because of their very nature, have little religious consciousness, do not even have a capacity to appreciate music or poetry; while others are played on all their lives by the most

various influences. How absurd, then, to measure all men by the same standard, and to demand just the same outcome of character or even of happiness! People are continually blamed for not appreciating certain religious theories or experiences, whereas there are men comparatively moral who have no taste or capacity in that direction. They may, of course, miss much by their lack of appreciation, and perhaps they are to blame for not trying to develop their natures in new directions, but as a matter of fact their natures do not respond to the same influences with those of others. We might just as much expect a violet to be as fragrant as a tube-rose or a violinist to produce all the variety and volume of sound of a full orchestra as to expect some men, who are even moral, to be moved and thrilled by all those strange, sweet influences of nature and music and eloquence which so arouse those of poetical and sensitive natures.

To some persons, this doctrine of scientific necessity may seem like hopeless fatalism. But, in the first place, it is not fatalism. Fatalism declares that certain things *must* be: necessity simply affirms that they *are*. There is no blind goddess hopelessly fixing destiny, there is no harsh god cruelly predestinating our future. The necessity of science is simply that nature has certain laws, that certain causes and conditions produce certain effects. It is simply necessary, therefore, for a man to comply with the decrees of nature which are the so-called "laws of nature." That *is* a necessity, simply because the universe is consistent, and the same cause always has the same effect under identical conditions.

This doctrine, too, is full of encouragement. We know now that the universe can be trusted. It is a ne-

cessity — that is, a law — that water will run down hill, when not obstructed by some obstacle which also has *its* law. We can be sure, too, that certain causes and conditions will always produce certain character in men. Our reforms, therefore, rest on some reliable basis, and the doctrine of necessity is full of hope.

We have seen, too, that one of the necessities in a man's life is that, with a certain nature, he will act in a certain way under certain circumstances. Then, it is possible to change men by changing the circumstances and conditions. It is one of the possibilities of society to so change conditions as to help men and to modify their character. We can create new combinations and new motives. Passion along with a sensual nature produces drunkenness or debauchery, but passion along with better motives and ideas produces pure love and creates a home. Some men are born insane. We cannot help their insanity perhaps; but we can keep them from doing harm to themselves and others, and we might check the propagation of idiots. We cannot help it, perhaps, that men of unbalanced natures, like the assassin Guiteau, are born in the nineteenth century. Their natures are the result of heredity. We might, however, change the conditions under which such natures do such immense damage. First, we can help destroy the theology which makes such men think they are under the direct control of a god when they commit a crime; and, secondly, we can destroy the whole political method which brings such office-seekers to our national capital. Science teaches that our lives are under fixed laws, but it also teaches that those laws are under a regular law of modification. Mr. Huxley may be considered scientific,

surely; but he says that there are two established facts: "the first, that the order of nature is ascertainable by our faculties to an extent which is practically unlimited; the second, that our volition counts for something as a condition of the course of events." By education, physical development, new ideas of the universe, the gradual formation of better tastes, the cessation of the propagation of idiots and criminals, society could be changed. We need not, however, expect a complete reform at once. These facts, however, are undeniable,—that men now are under the control of certain causes, and that these causes may be modified by new circumstances.

But nothing teaches more plainly than the philosophy of natural law the possibilities of helping men. The teaching of modern science is that man was made as he is by the universe. Certain environments have caused a necessity for the existence of certain functions or tastes or tendencies. Consequently, new environments or circumstances will in the end effectually modify the nature of men. We are the results of certain causes in the past; and we, too, become new causes for the future. While we are children of the past, we are parents of the future. Humanity is governed by an infallible law, but we are agents through whom that law works.

But we, too, as individuals, have possibilities along the line of our own nature. We cannot absolutely change our inherited nature or develop any other nature than that which we have inherited; but we can develop the best part of that nature. Here, then, is something practical for all of us. We cannot develop our nature into some other man's nature, but we can develop the best

part of ourselves instead of the worst. Here is what men mean when they say they can do what they will with their own nature. It is sometimes asserted that, if a man can only follow his own nature, he might as well give up trying, and only follow evil. But the comfort is that some men cannot cease to exert themselves. They have such a nature that they are prompted to make continual effort. That which they call evil is only one tendency in their nature; and, when they think they are to yield to it, they find that there are other elements of their nature that are stronger and which assert themselves. A man's choice consists in this, that he can develop the best part instead of the worst of himself. By being placed in conditions where that best part of himself is developed, it gradually becomes stronger, and at last gains a triumph over that which is evil. When some man with a strong nature says to us, therefore, that he might as well become low and animal, we have no fear, because we know there are better elements in him that will not let him yield to that which is weakest. Each man has the possibility of developing his best self, though he cannot change to be like another man. We cannot say what all the influences around us and in us shall be, but we may make much or little of the influences. We do not make our destiny, but we may modify it. The child cannot help it that she has not as luxurious a home or as beautiful a face or as much genius as a playmate; but by cultivating her thought power, and living for her best ideals, she may make the best rather than the worst out of her surroundings. If we are in a profession or in public life then, although we may never win honor, we can in all our actions stand

for justice and fairness and integrity. We cannot help it that we were born amid poverty, but we can settle for ourselves whether we shall develop bitterness and envy in our nature, or crown our lives with manliness and generosity. We can decide whether we shall pay the most heed to the development of a sensual nature or to turning our ideals into realities. We cannot help it, if we have more passion than our neighbor, if our eye flashes fire while his is as calm as an evening star; but we can guide our passion, and work it up into real noble power. Let us be glad that our manhood does not entirely depend on some prayer or activity or struggle of our own, but that there is a great current of influences that took its rise away back in the chaos where stars were born, and that it is bearing us onward toward immortal beauty of life. Necessity, therefore, and modification, are not contradictory, but the complements of each other.

In the beautiful summer time, Nature seems to say to the man among his flowers and in the fields: "Work away among your flowers and grain, and take comfort in the thought that, with dew and sunshine and the life force, I work with you; and, even when you rest, I go on forever, and there will yet be sweet roses and fields of golden wheat." So this other promise comes to the man in the development of himself: "Work out your own destiny, and take comfort in this: that there are eternal forces working for you and in you, that there are influences which were at work before you came into this existence that are carrying you onward to your ideal, that the royal blood of all the ages is flowing through your heart."

IMMORTALITY.

THERE is, perhaps, no one subject on which there will be so much difference of opinion in an intelligent audience to-day as this one of immortality. It is not possible that you should all agree with any speaker on this question: it is not possible, because intelligent men do not agree among themselves. There are the most contradictory beliefs among the best of citizens and even believers in religion. There are those who firmly believe in personal immortality; and there are those who would like to believe in it, but do not find sufficient proof. Impossible as it may seem, too, to the firm believers, there are good moral men who do not have any hope of immortality, and do not desire immortality, even if they could have it. Mr. Emerson writes of a child, who had been taught that life would never end, and who then replied: "What! will it never stop? What! never die? *never*, never? It makes me feel so tired." That child is not an isolated specimen either, as there are men and women who declare, as I have every reason to believe honestly, that the thought of immortal life is wearisome to them, and they do not want it.

For different reasons, too, many consider any discussion of the question to-day at least unfortunate. The believers are, many of them, more or less conscious that at least many of the old arguments will not stand inves-

tigation; and, as their hopes are more precious to them than truth, if that truth should happen to be unpleasant, they prefer the doubtful support of unreliable proof to a discovery of facts. Many, too, who do not believe, themselves, still think it is better that the people should be indulged in a pleasant fiction, and therefore deprecate investigation. On the other hand, there are those who consider the belief a delusion and a foolish speculation, and think it a waste of time to spend one moment in its consideration. With the assertion that it is foolish to spend much time over mere matters of speculation, I heartily agree. "One world at a time" is a very good motto; and while there are so many subjects full of living interest to men, while there are so much poverty and cruelty and sadness here and now, it is wrong to make prominent matters concerning which no man can know anything for certain. Even if immortality could be proved definitely and positively, it would be a waste of time to make it a principal subject of thought, as the best possible preparation for it would be a moral life on this earth. It is positively wrong, too, for men to make prominent in their teachings a subject which at best must be clothed in mystery; to give as actual descriptions of a future life the creations of their own fancy; to assert dogmatically what they know, or ought to know, is pure hypothesis; to make sweeping statements which are founded on no facts; and to condemn as wicked those who are too honest or too intelligent to accept their unproved theories. But it is eminently fitting that we should once, at least, give this subject our careful consideration.

It is not correct to say that the subject is of no im-

portance to men, and has nothing to do with practical life. Anything that pertains to human existence is of importance. It is of importance, and of deep interest to the growing youth, to know whether he shall probably live to be forty or sixty years of age. It would be wrong for him to neglect practical duties for the sake of speculating over the matter; but still, in its own place, it would be a subject of interest. But if it is of some interest to know whether we shall likely live to-morrow or whether some child of ours shall live to reach maturity, why is it not of interest to consider the question whether we and those we love shall likely live on the to-morrow after death? Even if we cannot know, there will be moments when even speculations, though they be unpractical, will seem of the most transcendent interest. Any one who visits a home where death has just entered, though mourning friends may have no dogmas on this question, will soon discover that it is of interest to the most sceptical; and, though in honesty he will refuse to make unproved assertions, he will feel like suggesting at least a sweet Hope and a great Perhaps. As believers in a this-world religion, we may still, in a limited degree, consider very consistently the probabilities of a future life. Let us attend to men here and now, but men here and now are affected by influences even beyond the realm of positive knowledge. Men are creatures of hope and wonder and aspiration as well as of every-day activity. Admitting that old arguments and theories have been false, that men had better have given their time to cleaning their own streets and educating their children in morals, than to vain wonderings over the golden streets of a new Jerusalem, so much

time would not have been given to this matter, if it did not have some deep human interest. Prof. Ezra Abbot has prepared a bibliography of this subject, and finds that there have been written upon it at least 4,977 books. Many of the writers of those books might have been in better business, and the majority of the books are probably full of falsehood and immoral teaching; but that so much has been written shows the intense human interest in the theme. Coleridge makes Wallenstein say of his dead friend what some of us might appreciate:—

“Yet I feel what I have lost in him.
The bloom is vanished from my life.
For, O! he stood beside me like my youth,
Transformed for me the real to a dream,
Clothing the palpable and familiar
With golden exhalations of the dawn.
Whatever fortunes wait my future toils,
The *beautiful* is vanished — and returns not.”

Undoubtedly, the majority of intelligent men to-day have given up all dogmas concerning immortality; but it is generally in a true spirit of sincerity and because they want more light, and not because it is a matter of no consequence to them. Touched by the thought of mothers who have had their sweet babes taken from their arms, remembering orphan children who will never know the depth of a departed mother's love, calling to mind the illustrious dead who have thrilled the world with deeds of valor or inspired men with song and poem and inspiring eloquence, in the presence of marble now being carved to mark the resting-place of some of us, it is a question of living interest, Do the dead live again? Even if we cannot know or if we can know

that they do not, it is of interest, even if of a sad kind, to know our ignorance or our loss. Besides, if it is manly to want to live here, I do not see how it is unmanly to wish to live hereafter, even if we are not certain the wish can be gratified.

But, on the other hand, supposing we have no positive proof, is that a reason for practising deception and keeping silence? It seems like a parody on faith to be so afraid to find out the truth, lest we should lose our arguments. If there is no proof of immortality, then I want to know it: if the common arguments in its favor at least are false, then I want to know that. Let us build our hopes upon no falsehood. Whatever is to be is well, and we should not fear to find it out. Let us go down into death with our eyes open. If immortal life is too uncertain for us to make it a basis of activity, then let us find it out, in order that we may find some verifiable fact that is sufficient. We want to be soothed by no opiates of priestcraft and ignorance. Let us not fear to meet annihilation, if that is our destiny. We ought to spurn with honest contempt all the arguments which cannot bear the light of investigation. Unless this universe is all a lie, men will not be permanently helped by a belief which is not founded on facts. Let us then consider the essential facts and arguments on this question.

The greatest difficulty in considering the subject of immortality is that men settle it by prejudices rather than by arguments. They make their wishes and hopes stand for proof.

Two assumptions, at least, must be removed, before we can discover any real truth on this question.

One assumption, which is not very common, but which nevertheless has its influence in some arguments to-day, is that a belief in immortality is an evidence of intellectual weakness. There is some reason for such an assumption. Any really intelligent and thoughtful men cannot help but know that the common arguments for such a belief grow out of human ignorance. Men assert the most dogmatically in regard to a future life: whereas, if they knew the facts in regard to the records on which they base their arguments, they would have no proof. The people, too, who are the surest on the subject, are often the most ignorant; and, the less they really know, the more definite are all their descriptions of the future. The surer men have been about a future, the more coarse and sensual and barbaric have been their heavens or hells. The more refined men become, the less they dogmatize; and, even if they retain a belief, they confess that they have no clear conception of what the future is to be. An acquaintance with the growth of popular belief and a knowledge of the real nature of man have undoubtedly robbed men of the certainty of a future life. Consequently there has grown up in some minds an idea that it is a sign of ignorance to believe in it. But it is unwarrantable to assume that it is a sign of intellectual superiority to be a disbeliever. A belief or not belief has no intellectual significance whatever. It does not make a man any the less scientific or acutely intellectual, because he maintains, after giving up false arguments, that he hopes for a continuance of life. The quality of his mind is to be discovered simply by the kind of basis on which he builds his hopes.

Another assumption which prejudices this whole ques-

tion and makes it almost impossible to find out the truth about it is that a belief in immortality is an evidence of moral character; and a disbelief, of immorality. For example, if I were to assert that I was a firm believer in immortality, it would at once raise me in the estimation of many people, though my moral character would not be at all affected by such an assertion. On the other hand, if I were to state that I saw no good reason for such a belief, many would at once pronounce me dangerously immoral, though it might be in the interests of truth and honesty that I made this latter statement. The fact is, however, that the only morality about the whole subject in itself is that it is immoral to support it by false arguments, as is often done, and that it might be in the interests of the highest morality for a man to state that he saw no proof. Unless we can lay aside prejudices like these, we can never find out the truth. A belief in immortality has nothing directly to do with morality. A man is no more moral because he says that he expects to live to all eternity than if he says he expects to live till he is sixty. His morality depends upon *how* he lives, not how long. Some of the best men do not believe in a future life: many of the most coarse and sensual men are firm believers in it, and their highest ideal of eternity is a place for eternal sensual pleasures. They obey a few commandments here, perhaps, which may or may not be really moral, not because they are really virtuous, but for the sake of eternal sugar plums after death. There are good moral men who do not even want immortality. I do not agree with them; but I am not necessarily any better for my hope, and they are morally no worse for their lack of hope. Histori-

cally, it can be shown that this doctrine has not only not been any cause of morality, but has really hindered morals. As it has been held, it has taught men to turn their attention from real good conduct in this life to such forms and services as would bring them eternal life. Instead of trying to make men happy here, it has led its believers to placate a whimsical God who would give a reward there. It was largely the cause of priestcraft. If God was to be placated in order that men might win future happiness, then there must be priests and mediators who were to intercede for the people. Hence grew up a class of men who lorded it over the people, and interfered with marriage and commerce and natural happiness, in the supposed interests of a future life. The Inquisition and the rack, and all persecutions, historically grew out of a belief that a future life was the most important, and that any means might be used to make men suffer here in order that they might be happy there. The most ardent defenders of the doctrine, too, have often attached morality to a belief in it in such a manner as to really endanger the natural foundations of morality. Luther said that, if there were no future life, men ought to "plunge into lechery, rascality, robbery, and murder." Said Massillon, "If we wholly perish with the body, the maxims of charity, patience, justice, honor, and gratitude, are but empty words." Even Paul said that, if the dead rise not, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"; that is, let us be simply sensual. Of course, those men believed that there was need of virtue, though they so fixed it on the conditions of a future as to destroy the real foundations of morality in this life. But the greatest histori-

cal proof is that some of the most moral people on earth do not have any belief in a future at all. Mr. Spencer, Miss Bird, and others, show that there are tribes which have a good morality, and yet have no belief in immortality. England and America have the most believers in a tangible future life; and yet, according to the testimony of the most careful observers, there is as much immorality in Liverpool and London and New York as in any great cities of the world. The national policy of England is as selfish as that of any nation on earth. Its dealings with other nations, its wars of conquest and cruelty, even in our day, do not show that its belief in this doctrine is much aid to morality. Logically, a belief in a continued existence after death does not tend to make a man moral, any more than a belief that he will live to be ninety instead of forty. Even those of us who may believe in a future life, if we are moral at all, are not so because of that belief. That future life is too distant and shadowy to be a present motive. If we are moral, we are so because of a good organism, because of outward influences, because of motives which are direct, and because we find the most life and happiness in morality. Practically, that other-world belief, as held by many people, tends to immorality. A belief in some way to get life by living long instead of living deep, in getting it by substitution instead of personal effort, tends to make starved, narrow natures. This prejudice ought therefore to be taken out of the way, in considering this subject.

One consideration that may bring us some comfort is that any uncertainty that may have grown up in modern times in regard to the proof for a future life does not

take away any noble man's happiness. In the first place, if there is such a life, and if there is anything good in it, our lack of evidence now will not change the fact. But the essential point is even more practical. Modern scepticism in regard to the evidence really increases any noble man's happiness. This of course is not the popular conception. The assertion is continually made that modern rationalism is hopeless, and leaves us nothing to comfort us. But any immortality that is not proved, in spite of old arguments, would positively be a curse. Immortality simply means continued existence after death, without any regard to the nature of that existence. All the proofs of the Church, founded on revelations, in regard to a future life, have been associated with the theory that for a large number of the human family immortality would mean eternal misery.

Historically, among the Hebrews, Paradise grew out of Sheol. Originally, Sheol meant simply the dark underworld, where good and bad went alike. After coming in contact with Persian thought, the Jew divided his Sheol into a Gehenna and a Paradise. But into the Paradise were to go the Jews only. Historically, Christianity never grew away from that narrow conception. Only the baptized were to enter the heaven of the Catholic, and only the elect into that of the Calvinist. Even down to our day, the doctrine of immortality has been only a terror to the masses. Mere continued existence which means eternal pain for a large number, if not the majority, is not, after all, so much more comforting than agnosticism; and the Church has taught that a large number would so suffer, and in fact that the number of the lost would far exceed that of the saved.

Instead of this doctrine ever having been full of hope, it has been a terror. Not to dwell on the fact that the conventional heaven has been desired by any active man as only a little better than positive pain, the very respectable people, who so dread criticism of their dear old doctrines, have no idea that immortality is to be much of a comfort to anybody but themselves. A Scotch preacher once said he did not want to go to heaven in a crowd, and a great number of people today are of the same opinion. The Church has taught that a large number, if not a majority of men, are to have eternal existence at the expense of pain and agony. A proclamation of a doctrine like this is called a gospel,—“good news”; and everybody who denies it is called an agnostic, and charged with taking away the precious faith of the people. But we have not lost, but gained in comfort, if we discover that the arguments on which such a theory is based are utterly worthless and unreliable. Negatively, therefore, if modern rationalism has destroyed these arguments, it is so much clear gain for the aggregate happiness of man.

But, even in its purest aspect, supposed revealed proofs have brought less happiness to men than many persons comprehend. Let me anticipate here enough to say that any immortal life for which a rationalist may hope must be indescribable, because beyond experience. Feeling his own greatness as a man, he may have a large, sweet hope; but, the moment he puts that hope into details, he is perplexed. Can any man put into words an idea of a future existence that will not make such an existence seem either absurd or considerably below annihilation? Can any man put into words

any meeting of friends in heaven that would not suggest to a thoughtful man more misery than happiness? I need not speak at length of the lost unbelievers, who, according to Evangelicism, will be absent; nor need I dwell on the fact that the early Church never had any conception of an immediate entrance into heaven after death, as the dead were to dwell in a dark underworld to await the resurrection. But take the popular conception. Who are to meet in heaven after death? Not people with bodies, we know; for those bodies are in the grave. But the men and women we have loved had bodies; and, although there was something about them better than their outward frame, it took their bodies to constitute their personality. Can any live, healthful man receive much comfort by the promise that he shall meet a *something* after death, perhaps angelic, which is neither to be wife nor lover as they were here? When the sister of De Quincey died, that great writer declared that he was almost in despair (he was a boy then) when the minister read those memorable words of Paul, "We shall be *changed*." That was the sting of it,—that his girl sister, "who had crowned the earth with beauty" for him, *was* to be changed; and yet this conception is the purest and most elevating that has ever been held by dogmatic believers in a future life. But what intellectual man would care for an eternity in the company of those who make faith superior to intelligence, and who really think heaven is to be filled with their kind? An hour spent in the company of those who are the surest of their heaven is long enough now. Who could endure their everlasting companionship? Whether we gain anything or not, we are losing nothing in this age,

when we lose faith in the only immortality the traditional Church has ever tried to prove.

But whether immortality will bring much happiness to us as individuals depends upon what we mean by it. The word, broadly, means unending existence. Now, it is according to a law, perhaps, that nothing is ever lost in this universe. We are immortal, undoubtedly, in the sense that all of our power will be somewhere. It cannot go out of existence. But immortality might therefore mean a great many things. The modern Positivist says that man is immortal in the sense that the influence of his character will still exist in humanity. The harp is destroyed, but the tunes which have been played on it are still in existence. The Buddhist goes into *Nirvana*, into the Great All of life. The scientist might say that the force in a man is still conserved in the universe. All these are in their way suggestions of immortality, continued life. A man might talk flippantly of immortality, and yet hold any one of these theories. It is wonderful how multitudes are deceived by a word. There are men who are honored as comforting teachers of immortality, who really have no belief in any personal immortality for the masses of the people, but who gain a reputation for conservatism by using old words.

But let us see what comfort we can have, even at the loss of our present consciousness. If we are swallowed up or annihilated, then at least we will never know our loss. But, if we will be comparatively new beings, it will be nothing essentially different from what we are now. None of us who are men are the same, either in body or thought or sentiment, we were when we were children. We cannot put ourselves back into the old

consciousness of childhood, if we would. Our happiness is in what we are now. Not one of us can trace in our thought all the links in the chain of being. We live in what we are. If we are to be conscious after death, it will be a comparatively new consciousness. I only suggest this line of thought to show that we need not fret ourselves. We never live but one moment at a time; and what that change might be at death we know not, only it will not be necessary that we should be living over the past.

But, taking immortality in its ordinary meaning to mean a continuation of conscious personal existence, what is the proof? The ordinary proof advanced by the Church is of no value whatever. A common argument for it is that all men have believed in it, and therefore it must be true. But, if all men had believed in it, it would be no argument. The masses of men in the past have believed in many things that we know now to be false. They have believed in a universe governed by angry gods instead of by law. It really makes us doubt any argument for immortality, sometimes, when we consider how the belief in it came into the world. Men heard echoes, saw a shadow in the water, thought they saw another self in dreams, and therefore concluded that the other part of man existed after death. But we know their conceptions of another self were false, and our knowledge of that fact detracts from any value we might attach to their belief in immortality. Besides, we know now that men in the past had no means of finding out truth on this question which we do not now possess. They had less opportunity, because they were more ignorant and superstitious. It almost de-

stroys one's belief, sometimes, when he considers that perhaps he would never have thought of a future life at all, if he had not inherited the idea from men who were so ignorant and superstitious in their conceptions of the universe. But even the statement of this argument is false. All men have not believed in immortality. Even men who believed in ghosts or another self did not think of them always as immortal. The departed ghost was supposed to live near by for a time, but in many tribes a grandfather was forgotten or not thought of as existing. A religion, too, like Buddhism, which has three times as many adherents as Christianity, while it has a god, has no conscious future existence for men. *Nirvana* means an absorption into Buddha, or at least something more indefinite than our Occidental conception of active personal existence. Besides, many tribes have been found which have neither a belief in a God nor in a future life. That argument, therefore, is of no value.

There is no proof, either, from the supposed revelations recorded in a book. The Book which is supposed to contain a proof of immortality has not sufficient historical value to be accepted as proof. It is a composition of different men during thousands of years,—men who do not pretend to be infallible, and who had no means of gaining information on the subject which we do not possess. Besides, the Hebrew did not pretend to believe in the natural immortality of the soul. Before the Captivity, he believed in Sheol, a dark underworld, where good and bad went alike, and concerning which he had no definite idea either as to time or condition. The early Christians were interested in setting

up an earthly Messianic kingdom, and did not trouble themselves about natural immortality. There is no evidence that Jesus ever taught anything definite on the subject of the natural immortality of the soul. He taught, on the moral side, what kind of life men must lead to enter his kingdom on earth, and was not talking about length of life. Jesus did not rise from the grave; and, even if he had, it would prove nothing on the subject of immortality. Those who declare that he did rise make him a distinct order of being; but, if a distinct order of being could rise from the grave, it would be no comfort to us, who are not distinct from other men, and a rising from the grave would not prove endless existence.

There is, of course, the supposed argument from the intuitions; but our intuitions are the combined result of a nature we have inherited and outside influences and education. Would we have an intuition of immortality, if we had not been educated to believe in it?

What, then, can be said positively? There is no positive proof of any continued personal existence after death. Nothing can be proved that cannot be verified by experiment. Anything that has been tested by the experience of man can be said to be proved. But as no living man ever yet experienced future life, or has any testimony that any man ever did experience it, no living man has absolute proof of it. For example, we have absolute proof of the effects of opium upon the human mind and body, because there are multitudes of men who have experienced the effects of opium. We *know* the absolute value of a moral life, because thousands of instances have been given where certain con-

duct can be proved to be the best. But no man *knows* from any experience that man lives after death, because no living man has experienced death. The fact that there have been very strange manifestations to some men is no absolute proof. Something strange does not prove immortal life. There are many things that some of us cannot explain and do not understand. You do not understand telegraphy perhaps, I do not understand the telephone; but that does not prove anything but our ignorance. Some men may understand both of them; and, even if there are some things which no living man understands, it does not prove immortality.

But, nevertheless, I have a firm hope of immortality. I have no dogma, and I would not be satisfied with any dogma. Some things I know, some things I only hope. Both are valuable to me, but both cannot be presented with the same power to others.

No man can force his hopes upon others, and therefore it will be more modest to merely utter one's own grounds of hope. There are moments in my life when I see but little to encourage the hope; but, after rejecting all traditional proof, a hope of immortality is a factor in my life. Let me suggest some grounds of hope, not presenting them, however, as positive proof, or even daring to believe they may satisfy others.

The first suggestion is that such a hope is in perfect consistency with science. The best modern science is not materialistic. We know nothing about manhood, about thought or love or consciousness, separate from matter; but at the same time no man has ever yet proved that consciousness and thought are material. There is a movement in the material atoms when men

think, but there is a great gulf fixed between any material movement and that thought. In other words, there is something in man that cannot be resolved into matter or motion. There is absolutely no community of nature between a movement in the atoms of matter and thought and feeling.

Closely allied with this fact is the doctrine of evolution. Starting low down, the universe has at last reached consciousness in man. I cannot imagine any loss of that consciousness that would not be a step backward. Have we come so far for nothing? Has the universe struggled so long, and at last produced a Shakspeare's thought and a mother's love only to lose them? This would seem like degradation, but not evolution. Do not misunderstand me to say that the scientific doctrine of evolution teaches immortality. It teaches nothing whatever on the subject, and only deals in the knowable. What I say is that a hope of immortality is in perfect consistency with evolution and every established science. It is worth something to know that science has nothing to say against any such hope. As it has no dogmas outside of its own realm, and as our only rational hope of conscious immortality must be of a life not definable, science can have and does have no arguments to disprove it.

It is perfectly rational, too, that intelligent men should believe in immortality. No matter if the belief in the past has been connected with false conceptions, it is perfectly consistent with the manhood of one who lives a deep life to-day that he should have that life last and develop. A deep life, we feel, ought to last. Moreover, if we have been formed by the universe, all that there is

in us ought to have some meaning. Something in this universe has created our hope and aspiration and longing for life. Do not our hope and craving suggest a possibility of satisfaction? The universe has caused the fins on the fish and the claws on the lobster, and they are adapted to their surroundings; but is our hope and craving for larger life, which environment has caused, to have no native element? We have not had half a chance to try ourselves here. Is there no infinite ocean of life, where there shall be a responsive element?

I know, of course, the other side to such suggestions. Nothing might be lost to the universe, and yet our personal consciousness might be swallowed up. But, after all, is not our isolated consciousness a peculiar power? "We stretch vain hands," of course; but this suggestion is in consistency with our nature, and does not contradict facts. What mean these deep revelations of life that come to us in pure love that is so sweet in its suggestion that it causes us pain from the lack of pure and perfect fulfilment here? What mean these revelations which come to us in the weird music of Ole Bull and Beethoven? What means this mysterious secret which is suggested in starry nights or on lofty mountains or wild seas or in the perfume of June roses, except they suggest a depth of sweetness and being never yet explored?

"A yearning for some hidden soul of things,
Some outward touch complete in inner springs
That vaguely moving bred a lonely pain,
A want that did but grow with gain
Of all good else."

The larger we grow, the larger our wants, until we continue in the pure strain of George Eliot:—

“My heart, too, widens with its widening home:
But song grows weaker, and the heart must break
For lack of voice, or fingers that can wake
The lyre’s full answer; nay, its chords were all
Too few to meet the growing spirit’s call.”

But, in suggesting the reason of our hopes, we suggest why we hope. It is our best nature makes us hope. If we were only to find rest, we could find it as well, and better, in annihilation or absorption. But along with the development of the intellect has grown a desire to solve the mysterious problems of the universe. When we are at our best, we crave to know the secret, we want to get behind the veil to know more of what it all means, and would be willing to suffer something in another life for the sake of knowing more of life’s mystery.

Of course, I know that mere suggestions like these will be no proof to multitudes of people. It will be no proof to men who want proof texts and dogmas—and who are angry if we do not give proof, whether we can honestly or not—to make suggestions of deep, sweet, indescribable life. Here are no golden harps, no jewelled crowns, counted out and numbered. Here, too, is no scientific proof, simply because there is none. But suggestions that are in consistency with science, and are not presented in array against it, are better than false proofs or pseudo-scientific ones. Such attempted proofs as those of Balfour Stewart and Tait are as unsatisfactory as dogmas of coarse materializations or resurrected bodies. Their “unseen world” is simply this material

universe described in terms of ether and atoms; but ether and atoms are not theoretically "unseen" to the man of science. "Ether" bodies and an ether "unseen world" are simply more abstract terms of material science, as Mr. Fiske has well shown. But it is something to know that true science has no negation concerning any hope that lies beyond the material. It may not affirm, because such a life is beyond its affirmations; but its best supporters have no sneer for any honest, human expectation.

There are some practical conclusions to which we may come in a rational consideration of this question. However much some of us may believe or hope in this matter, many honest, moral men have no proof satisfactory to themselves. But, whether men have or not, what then? Taking the facts just as they are, that there can be no positive proof for some of us, what is the conclusion?

First, we ought to make this life the best and deepest possible. One thing we know: that certain conduct in this life can be proved the best, whether there is or not an existence after death. Even if there is nothing beyond death, it is worth while to make this life deep and broad and manly. Indeed, if we were sure of nothing beyond, so much the more reason why we should try to live out our best lives now, in the only existence we know for certain. Of one kind of future life, we can be certain,—that we shall live after death in our influence upon others. Such Positivists as Mr. Harrison enter upon a hopeless task, when they try to make a belief in and a hope for an immortal influence a substitute for an immortal personal life. There is no more selfishness in

wishing to live after death than before that event. But it is grand to live for that much at least. No poetry will ever express a nobler sentiment than that of George Eliot:—

“Oh, may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence. . . .
So to live *is* heaven:
To make undying music in the world.”

But, if there is to be a future life, there can be no better preparation for it than to make this one deep and pure and sweet. According to all analogies, whatever will fit us for deep living here will fit us for the best living hereafter, as we cannot carry over after death any better character than we have here.

But this is our deepest faith, that we so believe in the Universe that we can trust that all things are moving onward toward the best. At least, we are immortal in some sense. If personal consciousness is not the best, then something else awaits us that is better. We can walk then through the dark valley and shadow of death and fear no evil; for, whether our personal consciousness is to be preserved or is to be swallowed up in the universe, all is well. Though we have no dogmas, therefore we can have a sweet hope and a firm trust that whatever is to be is well.

THE GOSPEL OF LAW.

WE have considered together in detail the most prominent doctrines of the Church of tradition. It is appropriate for us now to sum up in substance the result of our investigations, to draw some practical conclusions, and then to decide positively what fundamental doctrine or theory there is for us as lovers of truth. Let us understand the special object in this particular study of religious beliefs. It is not that we may settle every moral and intellectual problem in the universe or frame a complete philosophy of religion. There is a great realm of truth yet to be investigated for our own moral and intellectual improvement. But our object in this special line of investigation is specific and practical. We wish to form some correct conclusion in regard to a theological system which is called a "Gospel," and we also wish to find what will be a basis for a real gospel in consistency with facts. We find that there is proclaimed in society to-day a certain scheme of salvation which is called a "Gospel." That gospel is based on supernaturalism. It presupposes a certain supernatural revelation attested by miracles, a special Saviour with a peculiar birth and death and with special powers of saving men and suspending natural laws. It presupposes the infallibility of a certain book which it makes a

standard of truth, and the special sacredness and truthfulness of a certain religion or theology; and it promises salvation only to a certain portion of the human race. That there is just such a gospel still is most manifest, although sometimes people who move in secluded circles seem to think it is outgrown. It is no "superlative" to assert that thousands of preachers and millions of people not preachers, in the United States, still nominally uphold just such a gospel. We need not imagine that the old inherited gospel is only proclaimed by the Brother Jaspers who are now proving from the Bible that the sun moves around the earth because Joshua once commanded it to stand still. The pastor of one of the largest Presbyterian churches in the country has been preaching a series of sermons recently, in which he even upholds the story of the creation of woman from the side of Adam, upholds the essential truthfulness of the story of Joshua causing the sun to stand still, and even the fish story in Jonah. According to a Boston newspaper, Prof. Townsend, a few weeks since, preached in that city upon "The Scientific Possibility of Bible Miracles," and argued that they were manifest violations of the operations of the known laws of nature. Even so liberal an orthodox paper as *The Independent* of New York, in a recent article, criticised the position of Prof. Stearns that the miracles "no more prove the divinity of Christ," and declared that it is "the Christ of miracles and the resurrection that give Christianity its historical foundation." During the last year, a notable controversy has been carried on in the columns of *The North American Review*, one of the defenders of the popular gospel being a layman and the other a distinguished

1

theologian. The layman, Judge Black, surely represents somebody, as he is an educated man in other departments; and he says in his article approvingly of the gospel of to-day that "parents teach their children that Christ is God, and his system of morality is absolutely perfect," also that the doctrines of Christianity "are divinely revealed, its fundamental facts incontestably proved." The "Christian religion" which he upholds, according to his argument, also teaches that punishment for blasphemy and idolatry was right; that wars of conquest were right; that God authorized human slavery; and that the toleration of polygamy was by divine revelation. He also upholds the credibility of the reputed records and of the infallibility of the Scriptures. He makes the death of Jesus an atonement to avert divine justice, and upholds the dogma of an eternal hell. Prof. Fisher has been applauded on every hand as a scholarly defender of the advanced Orthodoxy of our age; but, although he makes many concessions to modern criticism, especially in regard to the Bible, he still upholds supernaturalism. In answering the question "What is Christianity?" he divides it into facts and doctrines. In giving the facts, he says that the kingdom "began in the separation of one man, Abraham"; that this kingdom "was carried from stage to stage until its consummation through Jesus Christ; that within this kingdom true religion was planted, until it arrived at perfection in the final or Christian stage of revelation"; and that the Bible is "pervaded by another spirit" from all other books. He then excuses Hebrew slavery and the conquests of the Canaanites, the act of Paul in sending Onesimus back into slavery, upholds

the historical accuracy of the miracles and genuineness of the New Testament, and misrepresents Strauss, while claiming the truthfulness of the legend of the resurrection of Jesus, and defends Paley, who founded Christianity upon the miracles, as "one of the ablest defenders of Christianity." The doctrines of Christianity he makes to consist in Theism, the Trinity, the atonement of Jesus as a "substitute for punishment" on the part of God, and says that eternal punishment of some kind is so fundamental a doctrine that "Christianity stands or falls with it." This much notice of current beliefs is necessary, in order to show that we are not wasting our time in considering theories that are no more believed and in order that we may have some idea as to what is the popular gospel of our age.

We hear on every hand the necessity of accepting then this gospel of supernaturalism. We are informed that the man who rejects it has no motive for living, and that his life is without hope and joy. The criticism is continually made upon modern science and free thought that they make their believers sad and despondent. Even Tennyson has written a poem in his old age on *Despair*, which has been quite generally supposed to be a criticism upon all those who reject the old gospel. Let us therefore sum up this gospel which it is supposed is so necessary for human happiness and hopefulness.

The word "gospel" means "good news." On examination, however, we discover that this theory of supernaturalism is no gospel, because in the first place it is not *news*. It is as old as human ignorance and barbarism and fear. In its popular form, it has not one original feature, but has been borrowed and revamped from

every crude science and mythology and tyrannical governmental theory in every race of antiquity. The doctrine of sin and an atonement came from the old barbaric fear of ghosts and dead chiefs and vindictive gods. The common idea of prayer and a special providence came from the ignorance of men who knew nothing about natural cause and effect, and thought everything was managed by deities. The theories of miraculous births and immaculate conceptions had done duty long before Christianity. The "Trinity" came from Egypt and Gnosticism, the doctrines of resurrections and a division of the underworld into a Gehenna and a Paradise from Persia. The devil had his origin in the "principle of evil" of Zoroastrianism, and has been modified by every dark foreboding which has been expressed in any mythology of any age and every land. There is, historically, not one original feature in this "gospel" of supernaturalism; and, although many of those who technically proclaim it give men *news* and information, they do not get them from the "gospel," but from the science and scholarship which it is declared are in enmity with their system.

Then, a gospel must be *good* news. We hear much about the sadness of rationalism and agnosticism and the joy of the gospel; but, if it is comfort which is to be sought, agnosticism is infinitely more desirable than the popular gospel. According to that gospel, a large number of the human race are to be eternally lost. It is not very good news to be informed that our moral wives and children and dearest friends may, because of some lack of belief, be separated from us forever, and forced to endure infinite loss, if not infinite pain. It is nothing

to the point either to assert that all men might be saved, if they would only receive the gospel, because we are talking here of the *joy* of this gospel; and, according to it, some men *will* not receive it, multitudes of men *have* not received it, and, according to its teachings, sweet babes and gentle women may go down into everlasting punishment. It is true that modern believers try to modify this scheme so as to give babes and heathen a chance, because they have not heard the gospel; but, by a peculiar kind of logic, these believers send this gospel to the heathen, and even allow their children to grow to manhood. If the heathen would be saved without it, it surely is not good news to send them a message that they may reject, and in the rejection of which they may be eternally lost; and it would be a mercy to children not to allow them to grow up, lest they become agnostics and at last be eternally condemned.

Just so far as men really feel happy over such a gospel, they prove themselves almost hopelessly cruel. If it is true, of course we must believe it; but it would be the saddest news, and not the gladdest, that ever came to human ears. Fortunately, men are better than their creeds, thanks to rationalism and modern intelligence; and therefore many modern believers are not so cruel and heartless as they profess to be in calling such a system of sadness, good news. The significance of this belief in the popular system is not essentially changed because of the indefiniteness of such polite men as Prof. Fisher in not defining what future punishment means. The fear of punishment that cannot be defined is just as destructive to human joy and activity, for the indefi-

nitence only makes men uncertain as to how it can be avoided. Even on the most selfish side, this gospel is not good news to men. Among those who really believe in it, none but a few of the most ignorant and egoistic have ever been quite sure that they were among the saved; and the uncertainty has hung over multitudes of sensitive people with a terrible foreboding of doom. If men were to have nothing in its place, then it would be good news to know that this old gospel of superstition and terror was utterly false. Men would have very much more joy if they were simply to lead such a life as would make them happy here and now, and have a sweet hope and trust concerning what they could not know.

But we discover that this scheme of salvation is not a gospel to men, because it is not founded on facts. Anything to be a gospel must be true. I do not assert, of course, that men who profess to uphold this scheme never tell any truth to men. There are certain general moral and religious truths which are always true, and which good men under any technical belief may incidentally teach. But the "scheme" of supernaturalism has no basis of truth. The book from which it draws its authority is not infallible, there is no historical proof for its miracles, its god is the creation of the human imagination, its devil is only a fallen god of theological fiction, its heaven and hell have been made out of the consciousness of good and evil in men, and do not exist as places. Its salvation, too, is unscientific and false. By saying that it is unscientific, I mean that it is not in consistency with well-proved laws and principles, but is purely fictitious. Its atonements do not touch the real evils in society, which are the results of imperfect or-

ganisms, unscientific social and political and physical conditions, and false ideas. Its "sin" does not mean any natural evil or wickedness, but a metaphysical abstraction that human fear has set up between man and his god: it presupposes that the moral man, or man who is obeying natural law, needs converting or *turning from* his present course as much as the immoral man. Its Saviour is a dogmatic Christ of churchly scholasticism who is to influence Deity, and who never existed in history. Its prayers for the suspensions of physical and spiritual laws are founded on a theory of the government of the universe which is now known to be false, and have therefore never been answered. The whole system, therefore, *as a system*, is false: it is not a gospel to men; and it only has any meaning to the men of our age, so far as it gives up its claims of supernaturalism, and accepts rationalism and natural morality and religion.

But just here arises an insurmountable obstacle. The gospel of supernaturalism has been supposed to be a perfectly revealed system of truth. When it begins to throw aside its perfection and to take in modern rationalism, therefore, it ceases to be that perfect system or gospel. In other words, it ceases to be itself. If it is perfect, it has no logical right to improve. The trouble just now with what is called our modern gospel is that it has no consistent principle to proclaim to men. A gospel must be a gospel about something. It must have some principle which can be stated in the form of a proposition. We have seen that there are certain theories in society which are still held by millions of people which are called a gospel, but which are in fact the saddest mes-

sages to men. But, although different dogmas are held by different people, it is difficult to obtain a statement to-day of what is an essential principle. We cannot well accept this modern gospel, when its defenders cannot agree as to what it is in essence. Of course, in unfolding any principle, men might differ on many details and still preserve essential unity; but the theological differences of this age are fundamental. Some men say that the "gospel" is a message which, if accepted, will save men from hell; but Prof. Newman Smyth, who has recently been elected professor at Andover, is not certain about hell. Of course, it may be replied that at least it is necessary to save men from evil; but any rationalist will say that, and therefore there is no special gospel about a deliverance on the subject. Others tell us that the gospel is the proclamation of Christ to men, and that Christ is the test and standard of everything. But *The Independent* declares that it is not safe to begin with Christ, that there can be no supernatural Christ without the miracles, and does not accept the Christocentric theory of Prof. Stearns and *The Congregationalist*. Some tell us that belief is everything, but others declare that not belief, but obedience, is the crucial action on the part of men. The gospel is in the Bible, others tell us; but Prof. Fisher writes of the "gradualness" of the Bible revelation, and we would therefore have to know just at what step in the gradation infallibility begins. Logical men would like to know what a gospel is before they accept it. The indefiniteness of a certain kind of liberalism cannot be a gospel to men, because it has no consistent principle. Nothing is more worthless than a pretended message

which is not founded on anything but sentiment, which cannot be defined, and which directs to no conclusion. Much of this modern talk about a gospel of "Jesus only" is utterly meaningless. What is Jesus expected to do,—to save men from hell or to save them from evil by education? Besides, whom do men mean by Jesus? Do they mean the mysterious, indefinite character who is no more proved a Christ by miracles, or do they mean a supernatural Jesus? Do they mean the Christ of dogma, or the Jesus of history who was a mere man and is to be judged like other men? It sounds pious to some people, of course, to talk about a gospel of "Jesus only"; but until there can be some agreement as to what Jesus is meant, and what he is expected to do, and from what and how he is to save men, it is only a "gospel *sound*," but not a principle of belief or action of any kind. Much of the "gospel" of our day might very properly be called the doctrine of holy ambiguity. The principal agreement consists in a condemnation of those who do not accept it, but not in stating what it is that men are to accept.

Take the single question of morals as an example. Men are told to be virtuous, but they are not very generally told what virtue is or what is its standard or source. It is of no consequence to tell men to accept the morality of the Bible, because there are different kinds of morality in the Bible, the Old Testament radically differing from the New Testament. It will hardly do to assert that morals are founded on the intuitions of men divinely implanted, as men who profess to follow their intuitions come to such widely different moral conclusions. But, practically, the only unity those have who

to-day found morals on traditional beliefs, in any sense, is in their criticism of science. Many moral teachers spend very much of their time trying to show the danger of the evolution theory of morals. Just at present, the central point of attack is Herbert Spencer's *Data of Ethics*, the latest philosophical explanation of natural morality; and, on the whole, perhaps the best book on that subject ever written. This is no time to enter into a defence of any one man, and a gospel of natural law does not depend upon perfection in the philosophy of any single writer. But the point to which I wish to call your attention here, and one which is quite manifest to any one who seriously desires to find some consistent theory of morals, is that those who criticise modern science and believe in tradition have nothing positive to give men as a gospel of morality. When they give us some system or statement that will not be self-contradictory, we may be forced to accept it. In the mean time, terrible prophesyings concerning the danger to life that will follow if men accept a morality of science, and quotations from mythology and outgrown philosophies, will hardly do for a gospel to the active, thoughtful men of our age.

There are at least two positive reasons why we are forced to find some general principle for our moral guidance. One is that this popular gospel is not in consistency with scientific truth. Science simply means systematized knowledge in the general departments of human investigation. There can be no true gospel separate from facts. Apologists do not profess to deny that Lubbock and Maine and Helmholtz and Tylor and Darwin in their own several departments give essential facts,

but still we are informed that science is opposed to the gospel. As, however, no honest and intellectual man denies that the best investigators in their own departments are trustworthy, what is called the gospel must therefore be contrary to the best proved facts. What, therefore, is a "gospel" worth, which opposes the best thought of the age or tries to ignore it? Of course, our modern thinkers and investigators are only fallible, but surely the men of a past age were not superhuman; and it is at least probable that the conclusions of men who not only have all the knowledge of the past, but also of the present, and conclusions which are accepted everywhere else, cannot be honestly rejected or ignored by the Church. A true gospel must be founded on facts, and not on mythology. As the old one is not founded on facts, there is a demand for a new gospel.

Again, a different gospel is necessary, because the old one is no more heartily accepted by the thoughtful men of our age. Of course, as I have said, thousands of men nominally accept the old faith. The most intellectual men of our age, however, do not accept it. Many men may of course have a great deal of knowledge in certain directions, and still accept conservative theology. But there was never a more superficial method of supporting a decaying theology than to quote the opinion of some politician or statesman in the past, whose investigations have been in an entirely different direction. Some man in the past may have made a very successful general; but, unless he gave especial attention to fundamental moral questions, he can hardly be taken for authority to-day on theology. It is really amusing to see the quotations from some politician of fifty years ago,

in behalf of exploded theories,—some man, too, perhaps, who did not through his life show a strong enough belief in the faith to even accept it as a principle of guidance in his public life. Men, too, to-day, may be crammed with very much transcendental and mystical lore, and yet not be strongly intellectual. The mind, like the body, may be crammed with so much undigested material as to destroy its real power; and many men have a great many facts without being able to perceive what conclusions grow logically out of them. There are not more than three or four prominent scientific thinkers in America who accept the old theology, and perhaps not one poet of national reputation accepts Orthodoxy.

The author of *Rocks Ahead* has shown that in England the intellect of the nation is not in harmony with the nation's creed. Social and political reasons make many men nominal supporters, who do not really believe. In this country, the masses of believers who honestly accept the old faith have done so without any personal investigation, and because they think there can be no morality or religion separate from it. Some men, too, go back to an old settled faith, because they have not enough moral or intellectual power to form their own conclusions, and think it easier to accept what other men say is settled. Many men and women adhere to the Church, because of their love of art and music and sentiment. That the majority of active business and professional men do not believe the old gospel is evident from the fact that they are not church-members. If they were hearty believers in it, they would not only support the Church financially, but would openly profess

its faith. Men often pay pew-rent to please their wives, just as they would please them in any whim, but with no deep convictions of their own. Others support the Church, because they want their children to have some place of moral instruction, and at present they think there is nothing better. Hundreds of men nominally support the Church for social and political reasons, and because it will give them influence. A man who is a candidate for public office knows that, while the masses of men are governed by their prejudices rather than their reason, it will pay them to flatter the old theology. But there is no mathematical jugglery that can change the fact that the Church is making few converts among intelligent men. It was an orthodox minister in Maine who said, substantially, at an installation service, that he hoped the new pastor would try to get some men into his church, and not try to swell the statistics by forcing in women and four and six year old children, as is so often done. The religious papers are continually mourning over the fact that the Church is making few converts. But, if the strongest and most intellectual men and women of the age are not accepting heartily the old faith, it is proof that there is a necessity for something else. The moral life of men cannot be developed, unless it is in consistency with the highest intelligence and best thought of the age. A half-belief soon changes into a make-believe; and, for any man who will closely observe our church life there will come a consciousness that there is too much insincerity and policy and indefiniteness and half-heartedness to make the present gospel an aid in creating heroic and honest and genuine men. There is, therefore, a necessity for a new gospel.

What, then, are we to have for a fundamental principle? The gospel which seems to me to be the only real one for our age, and for the future, is the Gospel of Law. In using such a term, I do not use it to the exclusion of other terms which are in many respects synonymous, or with any idea that it is more comprehensive than some others, but because it seems to me to contain the essence of that which must be the basis of any moral teaching.

Let me explain what I mean by the word "law." There are many people who think, when they hear the word, that it means the commandment of some person or the enactment of a legislative body. But, although the word is often legitimately used in such a manner, it also has a deeper meaning. Mr. Spencer defines it as the uniformity of relations among phenomena. One of the best explanations of the true meaning of the word is that of George Henry Lewes. Law simply means the process of phenomena. We observe that phenomena coexist and succeed each other in a regular manner, and we call that process a law. A law of nature is simply the method of nature. We observe a certain "order of sequence among certain phenomena," and we call it the law of those phenomena. We observe, for example, that the horse seeks food at certain periods; and we call that conduct a law of his nature. It is simply a name given for certain uniform actions or phenomena. There is very much misconception, not only among believers in miracles, but even among progressive thinkers, in regard to natural law. We often hear it said that science makes law its god, as if law were considered a power controlling events. Others say that law controls the universe, as if law were a force or entity separate from

phenomena. Law, however, is simply a convenient conception of the human mind, or a name to express how things are or act. We notice certain processes, and we imagine that there is some law that forces the process. There are certain causes and conditions which create certain results, and the process *is* the law. In general, not law as an entity, but the universe, causes men and animals to be or to act; and that process we call, for convenience, a law. The fundamental conception under this theory of law is simply, therefore, that this is a universe of cause and effect, and that, when certain causes and conditions exist, certain effects will follow. These causes and conditions are already in phenomena too, and nothing is ever miraculously put into them.

There is therefore no foundation for the common criticism that a belief in universal law leads to fatalism. "Fatalism says that something must be," but necessity says simply that something *is*. It is not a law that makes the horse seek food: it is *hunger*; but, when that hunger uniformly produces certain conduct, we name the uniformity a law. Law, therefore, is not a god, a force separate from phenomena; but all phenomena exist and succeed each other in consistency with certain causes and conditions inherent in the constitution of the universe. Practically, therefore, when we say this is a universe of law, we mean that certain causes which now inhere in the universe uniformly produce certain results. When there are results we cannot understand, it simply proves that we do not yet know all the causes and conditions. Without stopping, therefore, to explain at each point, when I call this a universe of law, I mean that it is a universe where certain results

invariably follow from certain causes and conditions which are now at least potentially in the constitution of things.

This is a new gospel,—not in the sense that no man ever proclaimed a law in the universe until this age,—but that such a principle was never before made the foundation for a gospel. Some men in the past recognized the principle of law; but it has been supposed by those who pretended to have a gospel that it must be founded on some suspension of that law. It has remained for our age to try to build a gospel directly upon the law revealed by science.

All sane men believe now that, in all ordinary matters, certain natural causes will produce certain effects. For instance, no man expects wheat to grow from barley or figs to grow from thistles. All the facts prove moreover that there is no exception to this principle anywhere in the universe or in any department of life. The question as to the existence of a Deity is not at all affected by this principle. Whatever divine power exists is in the universe, and is never put into it. We know of nothing outside the universe. There are mysteries in the universe, and the greatest mystery is often in the uniformity of cause and effect. We do not know, for instance, how food taken into the body will make men think, or how brain and thought are connected. What we do know is that they are connected in a uniform manner. Man is a mystery, whose nature cannot be wholly understood; but no special man is a special mystery. Every babe is a mystery; but the babe Gautama or the babe Jesus is not outside the regular laws of sequence. We may not always know all the causes

or conditions; but, if we did, we would discover that there are natural reasons for the production of all men of genius. Heredity, organism, education, race tendencies, and political and moral and physical surroundings are natural causes of a Jesus as much as of a Confucius. Many persons acknowledge the principle of law everywhere except in humanity. But leaving out the ultimate mystery which no man can fathom, and acknowledging that we do not yet know all the causes of genius, man is just as much a creature of law as nature or animals, and is in fact a product of nature. Certain great men have undoubtedly influenced humanity to a great degree, and have themselves become new causes; but they were themselves caused by influences that preceded or surrounded them. The mystery of manhood in general may be acknowledged, but Jesus was just as naturally caused by Jewish and other Oriental influences as was Marcus Aurelius by Roman civilization. No single man was ever so absolutely above his fellows as to be a miracle. A man seven feet high may seem a prodigy; but, as there are many men six feet and eleven inches in height, we do not need to presuppose a miracle. The fact is that everywhere certain natural causes are producing certain natural effects. If we do not understand everything to-day, it is simply because of our ignorance; and, according to all history, the sphere of the special has been gradually limited and the sphere of the natural has been enlarged, until we can believe that at last natural law will be recognized everywhere.

But men assert that a gospel of law is harsh and cruel. Is it a gospel? In the first place, it must be a gospel, if it is true. Nothing is good that is not in con-

sistency with the facts of the universe, as we have no standard of goodness except the universe. Moreover, it is a poor reverence men pay the universe, when they say its laws are cruel. Men sometimes in their prayers and sermons thank their god that the world is not governed by laws which would be blind and cruel. This is, however, rather a severe criticism upon their god. They pretend to believe in a personal god who created the world and gave it certain laws. Then, they turn about and insult their god by saying his laws are cruel. But unless there is some power in the universe greater than God, he must be in the laws. To call the laws cruel is therefore to call him either immoral or weak. The whole of the popular gospel, however, is founded on the theory that the god is malicious and cruel. Either the laws are cruel by which he governs the universe, and he has to be continually suspending them, or else Jesus is set up as a mediator to appease him. In either case, he himself is represented as having a very poor moral character.

But the gospel of law is a gospel of faith and hope. Multitudes of men to-day are utterly faithless. Many are full of credulity and fear, but not of faith. Many are so faithless that they think, if the truth were known about their theology and their Bible, society would go into moral chaos. Science may be true, but it will not be safe to let men know its teachings and apply it to their theology. God and the universe cannot be trusted; and so the crowd must be kept respectable by a devil and a fear of hell, whether real or not. If men should find out how things are once, everything would go to eternal ruin. Men cannot be trusted with facts. This

is the infidelity of the old gospel. The faith of the believer in the gospel of law, however, is deep and perfect. Everything works according to a certain law of cause and effect. There is no suspension of law, there are no fiats. We can study with a faith that the universe can be trusted; we are not afraid to find out facts, because we believe that the facts are safe. We are not afraid that morality will cease, because we believe that the universe itself has at last produced men with a nature that demands morality. We believe that religion is a reality, because the mighty forces of this universe, acting on man's nature, has made him a creature of aspiration. We can enter upon certain moral reforms, because we are sure that, when we set certain causes in motion, they will invariably produce certain effects. Our faith, too, is strong and vigorous, and in exact consistency with the best intellectual development of men. It is often said by believers in the old gospel that at the hour of death men will feel the necessity of accepting their faith. But it is a poor compliment to a faith that men should accept it at the hour when they may be physically and intellectually weak, and not in their power and vigor. The gospel of law can be accepted by the strongest men in their best hours, and not merely when their brain has ceased to do its best work. We have a deep faith even in the hour of death, because we know that this universe is moving right on in a regular manner in consistency with certain principles; and, after we have done all we can, we can lie down in perfect confidence that all is well, that there can be no accidents, and that in any other world or other life we cannot drift away from the eternal law.

The gospel of law is that men must bring themselves into harmony with certain natural and immutable laws, and that by obedience to these laws they will be saved. Whosoever lives up to the laws of the universe and of his whole nature will be saved.

Practically, let us sum up all church doctrines in consistency with this principle. We have, for an ultimate reality, a divine power, which is ever manifesting itself in consistency with regular law. Whether we call that power a stream of tendency or a Cosmic Deity, we feel ourselves just as much bound to submit to it in loyal obedience, and just as sure that in obedience to it we will be on the side of the real Eternal which makes for righteousness, as the man who talks in traditional language. Moreover, we can follow our emotional nature in calling that reality by what name we please, so we practically recognize that it only works through regular law. On the subjective side, too, we cherish all those emotions and aspirations and ideals which, according to the law of evolution, have at last been produced in us by the universe. We have a real Infinite, too, which reveals itself in every flower and blade of grass and thrill of love and impulse of heroism and aspiration. We know nothing of "brute matter" and "cruel laws," because this universe in every part and particle, and every atom and molecule, is all alive with mystery and meaning. We can use one book and all books with a clear understanding of their value, because we know they all grew, as the grass grows, in consistency with natural law, and contain the expression of the emotion and thought of men in a particular age. We tremble before no miracle, because all life is a mystery;

and the greatest mystery is in natural law. Satan and sin and hell are to us personified conceptions of wrong and its penalties, and of maladjustment. Our predestination is that certain causes of heredity and condition and conduct invariably produce certain effects. Our faith is not a mysterious something implanted in the soul by magic, liable to be lost any time before death, not an amulet,—“now you have it, and now you’ve lost it,”—but is the natural result of intelligence. After discovering that there are certain facts and laws in the universe, we naturally have a feeling that all is well, and either in life or death we have no doubt, but can rest ourselves in perfect confidence on the eternal law and power. The gospel of law demands no conversion, and wants none, on the part of the moral man. It only demands that he shall keep right on in upholding natural and universal law. The only conversion there is is that the man who is doing wrong should *turn around* and begin doing right. Even he cannot be completely changed in a moment; but he can begin to change, and he can cultivate new habits and place himself under new influences, until his nature will be modified in consistency with natural laws. There can be no salvation except in obeying the laws of the universe. Somebody must suffer, whenever any natural law is broken.

George Eliot is often condemned, because it is said her writings are so dark and hopeless. The fact is that sentimentalists condemn her because she tells the exact truth, that there is no escape from the consequences of certain conduct. She preaches the real gospel, and tells men the good news that there is blessing in obedience. As she makes one of her own characters say:

"I hate that talk o' people, as if there was a way o' making amends for everything. They'd more need be brought to see as the wrong they do can never be altered. When a man's spoiled his fellow-creatur's life, he's no right to comfort himself with thinking good may come out of it. Somebody else's good doesn't alter her shame and misery."

No prayer either can change the natural consequences of certain facts.

"No diver brings up love again
Dropped once, my beautiful Félice,
In such cold seas.
.

"Are the skies wet because we weep,
Or fair because of any mirth?
Cry out; they are gods; perchance they sleep;
Cry; thou shalt know what prayers are worth,
Thou dust and earth.
.

"Can ye beat off one wave with prayer,
Can ye move mountains? bid the flower
Take flight and turn to a bird in the air?
Can ye hold fast for shine or shower
One wingless hour?

"Ah, sweet, and we too, can we bring
One sigh back, bid one smile revive?
Can God restore one ruined thing,
Or he who slays our souls alive
Make dead things thrive?"

No one can ever estimate how much human wretchedness is caused by the theory that, by a fiat or an atonement, heartache and ruin and wretchedness can be repaired. The real gospel of law is that men may be

blessed by obeying the laws of their own physical and mental and moral nature. Any salvation, therefore, must be something natural and in consistency with cause and effect. Jesus is a saviour to us just so far as his teachings and example lead us to live up to moral law, and to repair as far as possible any wrong we have done. On the subject of immortality, the gospel of law is good news, at least thus far: that it destroys all belief in any arbitrary heavens and hells, and leaves no portion of the race in hopeless misery. We know at least that, in some sense, all that is real in us will, by a regular law, exist forever. We know, too, that our future depends upon no whims, not even upon our poor theories, but is already essentially settled in the constitution of the universe. We have all the hope there is; and it is a natural hope, produced by the universe itself in our nature, and is not founded on uncertain miracles or doubtful proof-texts. Moreover, it is a pure, human, noble hope, a hope not for ourselves only, but for all who have ever reached consciousness and have felt the craving for a larger, deeper life.

We have, too, a fixed, consistent principle. There have never been any suspensions of the law of natural cause and effect. Prof. Townsend's assumption that, according to science itself, the creation of the world was contrary to the "established constitution of things," is in direct contradiction to facts and to the teachings of the best proved modern science. The preparation of a world which has at last produced vegetable and animal life was not contrary to, but only a development of, what had preceded; and it was in exact consistency with the existing constitution of things that, by a law of

evolution, higher forms of life should appear. A miracle is no more needed between a chaos and a cosmos than between the snow-covered rose-bush and the June rose. Mystery there was and is, but no miracle.

Practically there is no good news for men, except that of natural law. Men will succeed in any department just so far as and no farther than they bring themselves into harmony with the universe. It is reported that when Lincoln was once asked, if he did not desire to have God on his side, he said in substance that he did not, but he would like to be on God's side. No atonement nor fiat will ever make water run up hill. Rivers do not go out of their way to run past large cities, but men must build their cities beside the rivers. The universe is moving right onward in consistency with a regular law. If we would reach the haven of success, we must jump aboard. The powers are here: we must use them, and put ourselves into harmony with them. We must plant our mills where the current runs. The stars never stop in their courses. As Mr. Emerson says, if you want to succeed, you must "hitch your wagon to a star. No god will help: we shall find all their teams going the other way,—Charles' Wain, Great Bear, Orion, Leo, Hercules." Use the forces in the universe. Do not expect them to change for you. No God is angry, but the universe is inexorable. We all play a game against unseen forces, and no false move can ever be taken back. When your card is down, it must stay. Destroy your digestion, and it is gone. Injure your mind, and there is no remedy.

Here is the law of love. Obey the laws of the universe, and there is everlasting salvation, because there

are no whims or flats to bring to naught your hopes. This gospel declares inexorably that evil conduct cannot absolutely be remedied. But it has, too, a positive declaration. A man who lives out the laws of his being shall be blessed. His healthful organism will invariably be a reserve force to his children. When he sets in motion certain causes and influences, they are, in the nature of things, bound to effect some good. As men become more intelligent, they will see the immutability of natural laws. Gradually, they will seek to obey those laws, and new feelings and new tendencies will be created in the race. Without at all proclaiming any immediate millennium, it is easy even now to see how a large proportion of the ills which make men suffer can be removed. Without attempting any catalogue, it is not difficult to suggest a condition of comparative happiness, if men would only observe facts instead of trusting in mystical salvations. In the first place, it is possible to relieve to a large degree the miseries of the unfortunate. It is also in the power of men to prevent shipwrecks, railroad disasters, the burning of theatres, contagions and epidemics, the propagation of idiots and criminals and men with a ruined physical organism. It is absolutely within the power of men to abolish war and poverty, nearly every form of death itself, except that of natural old age, which, in a world once freed from superstition, might seem as fitting a termination to a deep natural life as the falling of the leaves in autumn after the gathering of the golden fruitage. We can see, too, that by the propagation of truth and the destruction of old terrors and superstitions founded on ignorance, along with sweeter manners, pure music, and the cultivation of

aspirations and deeper human sympathies, there might be, not many generations hence, a relatively perfect religious life and hope.

But a belief in natural law will keep us from expecting too much in our day. We must all do the best we can, but it is according to that law that everything cannot change in a moment. Science cannot change the organisms and tendencies of ages by merely propagating its truths. It is according to natural law that institutions and beliefs cannot change any faster than men have the capacity for something better, and men can only change by natural processes. Each of us must, in very honesty, utter our truth; but we also know that all men cannot, in an hour, receive this truth. This fact, too, has its element of safety. We know there cannot be any moral interregnum, therefore, because in the nature of things men cannot so suddenly give up an old belief as to have no rule of life. But we can utter our truth with perfect confidence that it must result in good. Practically, too, we see a necessity for uttering it, because among the children of Protestants at least, when the present teachers, who depend on ignorance and authority, pass away as they must in a few years, they will have comparatively few successors. The younger generation, growing up in the scientific atmosphere, which Lecky proves to be the indirect cause of the scepticism and best spirit of our age, will demand a reason for their morals and religion.

This fact is closely allied to one of some practical importance. We are all children of the past; and we cannot, if we would, cut ourselves off from our parentage. That past developed a certain moral and religious

sentiment. It is our mission to take up that sentiment, and guide it in consistency with what we now know to be truth. The sentiment of the past brought into existence an institution called the Church. That institution has often been used to enslave the human mind and to destroy natural human happiness. But it was nevertheless the organization which was created by the moral and religious sentiment, however perverted. The Church is simply the organization which stands for the moral and religious life of any age. If it is used in an injurious manner, it nevertheless is a natural result of the thought and aspirations of that age. Will the gospel of law or reason have its church? I not only believe that the rationalist has a right to use any organization he finds for the good of men, but, as long as men are as they are, some organization is necessary. The Church of the Future may not be called by that name, but something like it must exist. Moreover, we need give no account of our stewardship to men who are false to what we now know to be truth. The real Church of any age is the organization which stands for the highest truth and best moral sentiment and highest ideals, no matter if it denies every dogma on which the Church of the Past was built. Call the organization what we will, reason, too, will build its altars and have its communion of kindred spirits. Its church will demand no acceptance of dogmas on speculative questions. It will have no priests, but will have teachers who have been set apart by living men, because of their logical minds, their intelligence, their human sympathies, their sincerity, and their devotion to ideals and facts. Its supporters will commune with each other in their thought and sympathy, while each man will frame his own language by

which to express his belief in regard to mysteries. It will be simply an organization in which men will band together to study truth, to bring moral aid to society, and to cultivate deeper aspirations and purer human sympathies, with no authority but facts, and no test but character. It must and it will have, too, such music and art and picture and poetry as the Church of the Past has never known.

But we have a prophecy of such a Church even in the present. Already, men have begun to feel their manhood, to understand the unproved assumptions of a Church of authority, to comprehend their right to have the latest and best thought and their freedom in supporting that which is true to them; and already, therefore, the Church of the Future exists. There have never been such ideality and moral vigor and joy and conscientiousness and enthusiasm as are now in a few organizations which stand for facts, for sincerity, for ethics, and which build upon a belief in natural law for a basis. As supporters of such an organization, we have, for a working basis, a belief in universal law. We can be sure that conduct which is in consistency with such a principle must be good, and that every hope and aspiration which has had a natural cause must have some deep meaning. We can therefore say with Shelley:—

“We know not where we go, or what sweet dream
May pilot us through caverns strange and fair
Of far and pathless passion; while the stream of life
Our bark doth on its whirlpools bear,
Spreading swift wings as sails to the dim air.
Nor should we seek to know; so the devotion
Of love and gentle thoughts be heard still there,
Louder and louder from the utmost ocean
Of universal life, attuning its commotion.”





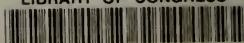
BK
984

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: May 2006

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 016 137 769 7